Whaling: A Japanese Historical Perspective

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

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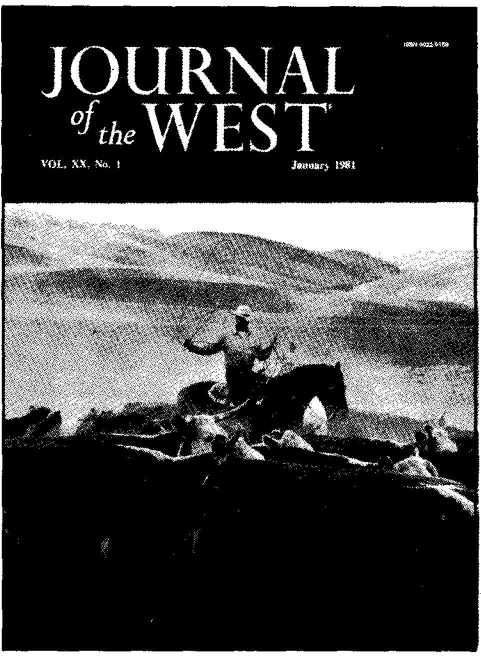

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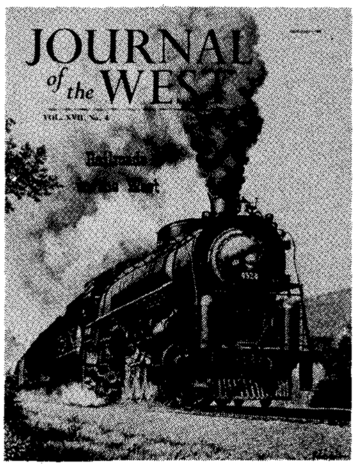

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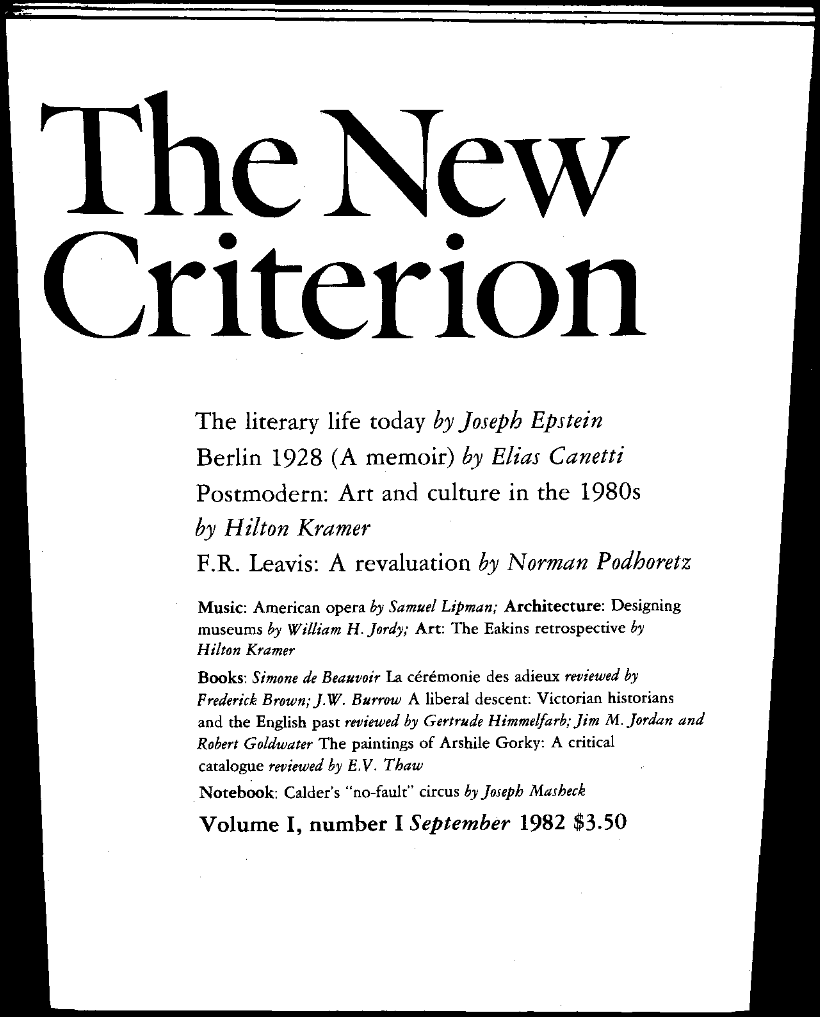

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Because we hold no brief with any country's slaughter of the whale—and least of all with Japan's (though the question comes down to "what" and not "how much," so let's not seem to be kind to the USSR or Norway, et al.)—it seemed to us that Elizabeth Schultz's "Eye on the Whale" (p. 11) might be instructive. First of all, it provides a historical perspective not widely available to a North American audience; second, it somewhat mitigates the cruelty and selfishness of whaling by suggesting a primitive kinship between man and whale; finally it makes clear that the *need* for Japan's insistence on killing the whale is more than a little suspect—that as an industry whaling has been small potatoes for a long time, and all rationalization in its defense is a dead letter. Thus our own view: Preserve the lore; end the practice.

In some respects this may seem to be a "Hoosier" number of the NAR. Heaven knows the Indianans abound: William E. Wilson (represented here not long ago by a fine short story) recounts his adventure with an odd kind of Abe Lincoln ladies' auxiliary; contributing editor Scott Sanders takes us factually and poetically to Indiana's limestone quarries; Roger Mitchell shares (with Roberta Swann) the second installment of our survey of current short fiction. We protest that this is no favoritism bestowed on Indiana at the expense of others; we don't have any control over where the talent is, do we?

For the rest of this number, we hope the content is sufficiently various. We give you Margaret Gullette in Florida and Ken Lash in Maine; we give you full-length short stories by Steve Allaback (California), J.P. White (Vermont), Elizabeth Tallent (Colorado), and Pamela Erbe (Michigan). And a resurgent "Unclassifieds" department, rich with gems. And poems (as they say) galore. And, of course, the 4-minute story. A sometime contributor to the NAR has written: "Why is NAR encouraging Sesame Street attention spans?" Oh, dear.

To sum up: This issue of the NAR is brought to you by the letters W and I, and the number 4.

A NOTE TO SUBSCRIBERS:
Because of technical problems in the printing of the photographic portfolio by Hamish Fulton, "Six Walks" (in the June 1982 NAR), that feature is reprinted and bound into this number of the magazine—together with our apologies to the photographer and to our readers. (The photo feature is *not* included in newsstand copies of this issue.)

LETTERS

To The Editor:

The following is my journal entry for 116. Saturday, July 3, 1982.

Acknowledge receipt of The North American Review, June 1982, early evening last.

This morning chores, 3 cups of coffee, 2 pieces of whole wheat toast with strawberry jelly, reading in NAR to and through p. 7. From p. 4 to arrival is American Eye, Straight Roads, Peg Wherry.

Met, on the trip, Heckman, the southwest Kansas resident artist. Wherry says, "The high plains are tough for landscape painters. Heckman uses tube after tube of raw sienna. Driving to Wichita one October afternoon, he looked out the window and said defensively, 'See? That's the color Kansas is.' "

This fore-noon, got out my tube of raw sienna, mixed a Liberal portion with strawberry jelly, spread it on whole wheat toast for lunch with 2 cups of coffee. Much rich flavor and Kansas color. Thanks, Heckman and, especially, Peg Wherry.

David J. Linton
Ft. Lauderdale,
Florida

★ THE NORTH AMERICAN ★

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Sheep May Freely Graze

The crowds at Disney World are uncanny to anyone who knows the feel of genuine crowds. It's not the way they're dressed, since their get-ups are the expectable comprehensive jumble; it's not that so many are obese, since that too accurately reflects the American scene; it's certainly not the proportion of children, because you're scarcely aware there are children. It's the way they walk through the Main Street of the Magic Kingdom or the fairway of Frontierland or the meticulously landscaped paths of the World Village—an aimless glazed walk, like people who don't know why they're there or where they're going. They're remarkably orderly for their numbers, remarkably clean and unnervingly quiet. They don't crush little old ladies to get onto the monorail or the double-decker bus or to get into the Haunted House; they don't drop cigarette boxes or candy-wrappers, as their authentic urban counterparts do; and in their thousands, in the vast contemporary Hotel or the eating places on the fake steamboat, *Empress Lily*, they don't scream with laughter, raise their voices in anger, or behave in any other spontaneous and unseemly way. They constitute a paradox: a well-mannered crowd. Americans are supposed to be anarchic—some of us like to boast of this still—but Disney World would not seem to be the place to go for evidence.

If this were the whole story, these people would simply resemble the crowd you are likely to find in a "good" department store: they are, after all, bourgeois consumers, consuming entertainment and food as well as the kinds of upscale goods displayed most modishly these days in boutique-like settings. Disney World is a high-priced place, and it is set inconveniently for the poor, on its own domain in the middle of the Florida plain. It's its own state, like San Marino: one kind of entrance ticket to the Magic Kingdom is called, fittingly, a "passport." A fifty-cent subway ride won't get you there. There are no compacts in the parking lots. As a result, of course, there are no bag-ladies to search through the hundreds of pastel-painted trash cans that line Main Street at frequent intervals; no gangs of roving youths of the kind who like to turn the "home entertainment units" on their shoulders up to ear-splitting decibels in a public place, or distract the attention of visitors to "Pirates of the Caribbean" with ribald remarks in tones meant to be overheard.

But the absence of the underclass won't explain the particular unanimated quiet of the Disney World crowd, the sort of low-level hum that, like white noise, does little more than mask a silence. It doesn't explain the tranquilized patience with which people wait on interminable lines, uncomplaining, for rides and meals. It doesn't explain the dazed look they wear, the kind of look a non-Disney World-goer finds slipping over her face when she enters her huge suburban shopping mall, knowing in advance that even after trudging for hours down acre-long aisles she will have found nothing she came for nor stumbled on anything she spontaneously desires. But Disney World visitors come to the Kingdom expecting to be rewarded for perambulating its more varied paths, and they can't deny when they leave that everything has been arranged for their pleasure and comfort—although they don't seem perfectly satisfied either. My mother declared they were "awed" by what they found, but what in the World can have awed them? This is the question that our group—all three generations of us—pondered during most of our stay.

Of course the World *is* awesome, if only because of those docile crowds. Imagine what a Minister of Public Order from some small, rowdy, poverty-stricken country would feel, looking at them: what a dream. But it's not just the good crowds. Imagine the envy of a Minister of Public Transportation, seeing the impeccable trains pull up to the terminals at scheduled intervals, the bus-drivers who are never moody or surly, the walls without graffiti. Any premier of a small country—any mayor of an old urban center, for that matter—would be proud to say he governed all this. The mayor might add, in extenuation of the World's successes, "Of course it's underpopulated and over-rich." This is a rare combination of attributes (even in Florida). Some would say it's an ideal combination—heaven on earth, or Abu Dhabi. It produces, at any rate, a luxurious setting.

The World covers 27,000 acres, and you can't miss the border, because the drab scruffy flat Florida scrub, littered with billboards, hideous motels, and the other detritus of unplanned development, suddenly ends. Suddenly the World is a beautiful place, with miles of manicured parkland, neatly mown and vividly green, enlivened by comfortably-sized rises and pleasant shallow valleys, watered by ornamental man-made lakes. Its plant material is tasteful and naturalistic—not noticeably tropical and not the slightest bit gaudy—the sort of sober and unobtrusive vegetation rare in Florida. The health, sound design, and amazing extent of the plantings would alike impress gardeners, landscape architects, and park departments. The World houses thousands (expensively), in buildings that range from two-story detached lodges in the woods to huge convention-minded hotels, but it gives the impression of being an unpeopled estate. Nobody walks on the grass. Grass, after all, grows everywhere: people don't come for that. The World concentrates its crowds where they belong, in its urban facsimiles.

These have been celebrated by the kind of city fanciers who really hate cities. The facsimiles in fact are intended to resemble villages or small towns or the newer urban agglomerations. The shopping complex called the World Village has the small scale, the uniformity of natural materials (brick and unstained wood), the irregular groupings of buildings and the charmingly shaped public spaces that characterize the handsomest new malls all over the United States. The "town" that Main Street represents is charming too, in an older-fashioned way. (The World has two dominant styles: up-to-the-minute, or several seconds after, and nostalgic.) Set on a straight line rather than on the serpentines of the World Village, the small shops of Main Street crowd against one another, fresh as new paint in ice-cream color combinations, offering specialties in a ma-and-pa grocery store setting. A tiny marquee advertises old Disney flicks, and a horse-drawn trolley takes you from one end to the other at a five-mile-an-hour pace. Years ago I read somewhere that Main Street offered Americans who had never seen such a thing a "European" vision of urban intimacy and visual excitement, but in fact it doesn't look European at all: it's too rectilinear and prim and unpicturesquely fresh, too stylistically homogeneous. Its clapboard smartness is an American fantasy derived from Westerns and Norman Rockwell covers, where people "visit" over the pickle barrel and kids can run across the street to the ice cream parlor without needing to look both ways. It's a dream of "down-towns" that never were. The hundreds who walk aimlessly down this street—tourists without guides, unsure of their mission—are not going to meet up with anyone they know to visit with; they have no business to transact in this place; no normal activities—fires, dog-fights—are going to erupt to focus their attention. Main Street looks intimate because it's miniaturized, but no intimacy can occur. It's just a setting, without the relationships that would give it life. No one knows what to do in it, except gawk. And, of course, shop.

The "attractions"—like the Haunted House and the Caribbean pirates—which are what most people think they come for, amount to highly organized forms of walking and gawking. Locomoting is part of the entertainment here, as it is everywhere in the World. My twelve-year-old picked out the organizing pattern after only two attractions: "First you walk through tunnels, then you get to go on a ride." The walks are intended to be mildly disorienting and to stretch the experience, as halls wind downward or jog left or right or double back. There's only one direction you can go: forward—the press of people behind you forbids retreat. If you decide you're bored or tired or feeling ill at any point, there's no way to end or to accelerate the experience: the ride that follows is timed. In the Haunted House you get into a rounded, hearse-like padded black car. In order to get everybody (the elderly, laggards, the bemused, small children) into the cars at the scheduled intervals, people-handlers in appropriate costumes help you first onto a moving ramp, like a horizontal escalator. From the ramp you leap into your allotted space. In the Pirates of the Caribbean this space is on a mechanized boat with many rows of benches. On the wharf the right number of people for each bench is shunted into rows separated by barriers: when the boat arrives each row is discharged onto its aligned bench.

The car—or boat, or train, as the case may be—takes you past the real marvels: the technological trickery that makes the long lines, the big bucks, and the perplexing unreality seem, momentarily, unimportant. In the Hall of Presidents (no conveyances, for once: it's a theater), the marvel is robots and "wax"-works combined: Lincoln speaks, moving his arms in faint rhetorical gestures and turning his head from side to side to make "eye-contact" with everyone in the audience. Andrew Jackson, a blond dandy, inclines his chiseled elastoplast features and points a booted foot. Your more animated ahistorical robots, the Pirates of the Caribbean, in characteristic tableaux, lift bottles to their lips, chase wenches, curse vehemently; dogs wag their tails, a crow on the head of a skeleton flaps its wings; fire seems to consume a building with leaping flames and smoke—there's too much to take in at once. Above your head as your mechanized boat goes under a bridge, a bare flesh-like foot dangles, smooth rounded heel, finely wrinkled sole—plastic verisimilitude.

The Haunted House is Disney's masterpiece. I *think* it's done with film and lights, but none of us could be sure. No need to mention the grotesque green-phosphorescent gnome whom you see, in a mirror, sitting beside you in your hearse—that apparition is mundane compared to the dancing figures. Your car passes over a ballroom in which people are dining at one end—a Miss Havisham chamber, with Banquo as one of the guests. Through darkness and cobwebs, you see people waltzing in the faint light: you see their period costumes, their calm absorbed faces, the twirl of rich stuffs. And then they vanish! You crane your neck back as the car slowly turns; you see them again—and they vanish again, into thin air. The car has moved you on; behind you, you can hear the intake of breath as another hearse-borne group sees and doesn't see the enchanted dancers. Everyone sees exactly the same spectacle: it is all, as I said before, timed.

And very brief. (The ratio between waiting on lines and actually seeing a show could be as high as 4 or 5 to one; for the interior rollercoaster called Space Mountain it might be as high as 30:1.) Within the few minutes of spectacle, however, the captive viewers have been bombarded with stimuli. It's sensory overload of the kind exploited by disco: it's a sound and light show that is intended to dazzle you without touching your emotions. The Pirates don't titillate, the Haunted House doesn't frighten. Everyone seems to know this in advance: "That's not what you go for," they say. "It's OK, Mamma, you won't be scared," my protective, superior son assured me, when I hesitated in front of the English manor that encases the Haunted House. There are a few laughs along the way, as cartoon-like figures pop up out of coffins in time to music, etc., but they are puerile laughs, age-eight fun. They are not what you tell people about: you tell them about the spectacle, which, being visual and auditory and fleeting, is indescribable. "It's indescribable," you say.

The feeling you're left with after one of these shows is equally hard to describe, because it's so slight. The technology is awesome, perhaps, but it produces a trivial product, and the awe that it evokes is necessarily insubstantial too. So what if Lincoln nods and talks, so what if the dancers disappear? These successes are too remote. It's not as if a robot were going to start cleaning your house, which would have an immediate effect on your leisure and your relationship with your spouse. At an enormous one-time expense, robots do banal things we wouldn't watch them do if they were humans—lifting their arms, bending at the waist. I wouldn't have been surprised to find a number of them mingling with us at the exit of each show, yawning politely behind waxy hands in which you'd almost swear you could see the veins. But it's no surprise that in each spectacle so many robots are moving all at once—rapidly, cacophanously, distractingly. The monotony of each individual act is masked by the multiplication of acts. Sometimes you hear visitors say they'd "love to go through that attraction again," but they don't. Once is enough.

Still, the idea behind the attractions (*the concept*, as the advertising people say) has got to impress you. To borrow and combine so widely from the entertainment genres, making disco and Mme. Tussaud alike seem obsolete; to regulate the vast audience's emotions so carefully, avoiding feelings like horror which would incommode some, and substituting awe, a vapid and inoffensive response; reducing engineering to robot mechanics, artistry to plastic replication and photocopy portraiture, and computers to coordinating devices for all these toys—all this we had to recognize and wonder at. We knew we were seeing all the progress of the modern world summarized: the industrial revolution and the post-industrial revolution and even the old pre-industrial crafts were all concentrated together in this one place just for our interest and entertainment. Disney's architects and engineers and computer whizzes must have loved what they were doing with their wires and audiotapes and bytes. They must have thought they would cash in on the awe in which Americans have held technology since John Glenn orbited the little world. Misled by their own creative, practical fervor, they forgot that the spectators would be passive; they didn't anticipate that the first brief stupefaction would be followed by a vague discontent.

Because the robots and the colored lights are what people believe they come to the Magic Kingdom for, it may take quite a while to notice that there isn't a human being in sight. "Not a single actor," my husband observed. "No time and a half for overtime, no pension costs, no union hassles." This assures that the attractions have nothing in them that cannot be exactly duplicated time after time, nothing that might get sick, fluff its lines, or walk out in disgust. It's another part of the ingenious concept. On Main Street there was a barbershop quartet, and some of the nightclubs have "live" entertainment, but whenever the World can do without people to bring the customers in, it does so.

When it needs them, on the other hand, they're there. Woody Allen said about paradise that it might be great, "but can you get a plumber on Sunday?" I'm sure you can get a plumber on Sunday in Disney's paradise. Late in the afternoon of our arrival we made a call to let the central management know that our tv set wouldn't light up, assuming as we did so that we would miss the late evening weather, and maybe even the morning forecast, before the set was fixed. *Three minutes later* an overalled young man with a manner gracious enough for the retinue of the duc de Saint-Simon—a young man willing to suffer fools gladly—had arrived to make the necessary connection and restore to us the prospect of gloating, meteorologically, over the rest of the country.

The workers one sees, and probably those we don't see, are all in the service fields—"food service," transportation, "service to buildings" (in the chillingly impersonal nomenclature that now describes what people rather than machines do). In this respect, the World is a replica—but to the point of parody—of the way we live now. Economists tell us that in the US in the '70s the *increase* in employment in the fast-food sector was greater than total employment in the auto and steel industries, and (barring catastrophe) the big increases in employment will continue to be in that and the other service areas. Nationally, these are low-paying jobs, nonunionized, mainly held by women and low in measurable productivity. In the World, a lot of the jobs involve handling exhausting numbers of people—not just getting them in and out of rides, but getting them in and out of restaurants, buses and other conveyances efficiently and at regulated intervals. It's repetitive work, and it's supposed to be done in a cheerful and personalized manner. At lunch one day our new waiter stumbled through his prepared speech—"My name is Jack, and I'm your new waiter . . ." with human fallibility With enough repetition, though, they all begin to sound as spontaneous as the robots. Trained spontaneity is the norm; Jack the anomaly. Everyone's in a uniform, something cheerful and "American" (i.e., ethnic or historical or futuristic). The young ones look cute in their uniforms—overalls and day-glo crash helmets on the monorail, for example—but you can't tell them apart.

If you hope that the service people will represent normal humanity in this over-developed country, you'll be disappointed: they're too good to be true. Residents of New York City and other major urban centers who have spent time measuring the height of the garbage in the streets will share our reaction to the behavior of our early-morning trash detail. The air was chill as the mechanized cart came down our cul-de-sac, manned by a driver (an older man) and a young fellow with an ingenious contrivance—like a pincers/scoop on the end of a stick—for picking up waste paper. The young one manipulated his gizmo with alacrity and went briskly on to the next front yard. I could have sworn he'd snatched every last disfiguring piece of waste up off the green lawn we weren't supposed to look at until it was clean. But no—the older man hopped out of the driver's seat, crossed around behind the car, and stooping, picked up two or three scraps I hadn't spied.

"What a personnel manager they must have!" a voice beside me whispered, with real awe. "What methods he must have at his disposal!"

Creating perfect order has its cost. On the monorail once after the attendant had opened a number of compartment doors, ushered people in, and gone by, I opened an additional empty compartment for our large group and sat down in it. The attendant ran back, frowning. "Previous compartment," he ordered, pointing to one not quite full (from his point of view) but too full (from mine).

Someone in my party said, treacherously, "He says we should get into this other car."

"Too crowded," I said crossly, "There's plenty of room here." But they didn't join me: each and every one chose authority over family solidarity. In the midst of embarrassment, I got out and followed them into the authorized space. The other compartment stayed empty for the whole ride. The people in ours smiled at us sympathetically, since we were indeed packed too tight, and when, having recovered, we started to say things like, "That was too bad," and "Very silly young man," they did more than agree: they began to get heated. "Overly regimented," said the woman. "This isn't the first time we've seen that," her husband added. After a bit of this, we all felt much refreshed.

In the World, everything has been programmed with forethought and a savvy conjunction of ends and means, even the lunch crêpes in one of the restaurants, which are awful in an intentional way: directed at just that huge group of people who know the word (and pronounce it "craypes") but *prefer* to have the pancake mushy, the turkey chunks over-cooked, the pea-mushroom filling out of cans, the cheese sauce the color and consistency of melted and recongealed Velveeta. The sense that everything has been planned—even to the number of the compartments that are to be opened on the monorail, and by whom—becomes so pervasive as to be almost eerie. For the last two years, mid-Florida, where the World is located, has suffered from cold spells to a degree that non-Floridians would find hard to believe. Even south of Orlando there had been frosts during the days just prior to our arrival, and in the citrus-growing regions there was talk of crop loss. But in the Magic Kingdom the tropical plants around Swiss Family Robinson's tree house were lush, and impatiens bloomed in hollows beneath the concrete tree. The parterres of flowers bedecking the stream's banks at the end of Main Street would rival those of Boston's Public Gardens in the height of summer. We might by this time have assumed that Disney employees, working in the empty Kingdom at night, had replaced frost-blasted plants with brilliant nursery-grown specimens, but such extravagance would have been impossible even for so perfectionist an enterprise: there were flowering beds everywhere one went. Towards the end of our stay my mother looked up at the sky. It was bright blue, dappled with occasional scattered puffy wisps of cirro-cumulus clouds, the kind of sky seen in Technicolor movies of perfect summer days. "Do they provide the sky too?" my mother won-

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dered aloud, laughing uneasily. Credulous admiration and skepticism may seem like odd mental companions, but in the World they find themselves struggling and combining often.

They had their final combat in the Contemporary Hotel, and it's only fair to say that skepticism won. Coming in on the monorail gives you the best first view of the Contemporary—and like all first impressions here, it's a stunner. The hotel rises like a sci-fi palace out of Flash Gordon, stony-massive above the surrounding countryside. Topiary animals on golf-course lawns below set the scale: outsize. If we had modern Pharaohs, they'd build modern mausoleums on just such lines. But solid as it looks, the Contemporary is literally hollow at its heart: the monorail runs through it, straight into its center and out the other side. The dwarf passengers, timidly debarking, look up into a vast central emptiness, sealed off from the sky by futuristic grids. The Contemporary is actually a train station, paralleled on each side by half of a convention hotel. As if the Hotel had been bisected along a central hallway and then spread apart by a giant's hand, each half exhibits floor upon floor of long, naked corridors, above the balconies of which can be seen dozens of evenly spaced doors. No one can go in or out of a room without being seen from below or across: it's like a complete system of surveillance. With its smooth bleak horizontals, its undecorated open corridors, the Contemporary within seems to be modeled on penitentiary architecture. But what's the point? Is it merely the least bad solution to designing a hotel around a train station, or is it supposed to be a new form of beauty? It's not hard to think of the movements and the expression appropriate to this environment: out of those bedroom doors, people filing like clockwork at the sound of a bell, each exactly 37 seconds after the other, so each can arrive at the gate without crowding and get on the train without delay. And would they do such automatic things voluntarily, placidly, and complacently? Having spent so much money to get into the Contemporary, they already treat the ordinary activities they perform there (eating breakfast, riding the monorail) as if they were distinguished events. Could they be brought to do anything—even acts they now consider heinous—if it were made expensive enough and routine enough, and labeled as an entertainment?

The planners programmed everything except the kind of reactions people get from being there. Here they seem to have messed up. They thought the World would make people feel good the way tv or sports events do, where sedentary spectatorship, accompanied by frequent high-caloric ingestions, is sufficient to the day. They overlooked the difference, that sports and tv (game shows, soaps, sitcoms) fill people full of passionate intensity: partisanship, anger, envy, desire. Only in its shops does the World cater to the familiar, complicated needs of the modern bourgeois psyche; everywhere else its entertainments are separated from our feelings. The robots and Main Street and the Contemporary exist as if in large glass cases, like elaborate scientific models whose explanation tags have been removed. You can't touch them, you can't learn how they work, you can't figure out what they mean. They might as well be modern art. In fact the Disney crowds look faintly like the crowds who have dutifully trodden on one another's heels through the monster museum exhibits of the last few years (Picasso, Tutankhamen). The museum crowds are sometimes, however, unhappy about the claustrophobia and the speed of their forced march, and some of them can be quite vocal about what's wrong.

In the World it's very difficult for average visitors to figure out what's wrong. The World is unique, after all, so there's no ready standard they can bring to bear to judge it. They can't say they've been passive because they've been kept moving all the time. They've gotten an eyeful. Because the world is so lovely and clean and efficient, and the people in it so well-behaved, it seems almost ungrateful to look for its objectionable features. Because millions continue to come, it's hard to grasp even the idea of dissent. Most people leave without trying to figure out what's bothering them. In my family it wasn't until we had crossed the border that we started arguing about whether the young monorail attendant was a totalitarian-in-training, and whether we should respond to an episode like that as to a real or to a symbolic loss of freedom.

Meanwhile many visitors without such questions in their heads are still not sure they had such a good time. Back home they tell their friends, "You've got to go," because it's more fun to talk about the World than to be in it. They'd like to ask, "Have we been had?" but—unlike a blunt old friend of my mother's, who roundly declared, "It's a rip-off"—they don't dare. It's not only because they've paid too much; it's because they have repressed sensations—which the Contemporary brought to a point, like a pimple not ready to erupt—but have no explanation for them.

What they have is an intuition: this ideal World is neither interesting nor admirable. In it they felt constricted, like children who are acting good for the sake of a promised treat. They sense that it's not a vacation spot as much as it is a state of mind; and they prefer their home state, which is—to begin with—more boisterous, unbuttoned, and free. They guess that they are looking at one of our possible futures; they guess that looking on in orderly ranks is all they'll get to do, then as well as now.

And maybe most of all they resent being pegged. Every system that seeks to please us presumes to know what we like. It turns out that some of us don't want to be known. At home we let the occasional market researcher on the phone flatter us, and the intrusions of tv advertisers amuse us, but in the World we can't minimize the part of these presumptuous knowers. Every aspect of the World is based on what they think they know about us. Even when they fail, they have presumed to know. This, and not just the taste, may make some of us gag on our crêpes. Before long their complacency irritates us even when they predict us right. If we had the words for what we feel, they would come out sounding something like this: "We won't be stroked. We'll even stop liking what we like. Give us back scruffiness, penury, shoving, and one good mouth-filling four-letter word." Every night when the customers leave, in fact, employees go in to clean off the graffiti that erupted during the day. Latent, irrational cantankerousness—that's what remains of American anarchism. It may not be much to cling to, but the fact is that in the setting most apt to smother it, smooth out its frown, paint it with a smile, and bury it in the ground, it survives.

—*Margaret Morganroth Gullette*

Views from the Shore: Maine

In the seacoast cemeteries of Maine people seem to be sleeping. Peacefully, by themselves, in a field. Wildflowers grow. Townfolk mow when it needs mowing, otherwise they let it be. They don't deface it with money. Along with some Vermonters, they may be the last people in the United States who aren't in general for sale. Possibly the last generation of the last people. Henry Barrow is 76, skinny, blue eyes either running or not, like tides. He lives alone in a house peeling down to shack, eats from cans, thanks courteously a local nurse who comes by with vitamins he clearly needs, then throws them out when she leaves. She knows it, she keeps coming by with them, he keeps thanking her. He sells her his biggest lobsters, understating their size. He has a small pound—a kind of wooden holding tank—offshore in a cove. You drop by the cove and he may be sitting there, he may not be. If he is, you tell him what you want. He hauls his rowboat into the water, rows out to the pound, brings back your lobster. No scales, no cash register, you bring your own pail to carry off your purchase. You thank him, he smiles. His teeth are awful. For generations his family has owned the cove and close to a quarter mile of shoreline. He has been offered over a million dollars for it, and does not consider selling. Relatives wait, one is told, but they don't suck around, or think of things to do to him for his own good. He says he sleeps well. That's a northern thing. You don't even need a clean conscience to sleep well in Maine. For half the year, bed is the only place that's warm and dry; the body is tired just from getting back to it each day, grateful when it does. And if there's a good norther blowing outside, or waves crashing, the body actually smiles, burrows in. Stern, dignified people have been known to giggle at such times. In the north the bed is for mother-warmth, not lovemaking. Lovemaking is not a useful word in the north. Reproducing, yes. Screwing, yes. There's a lot of horniness around. There's also a lot of nothing much else to do, and here are these little toys we've got and it's nice and dirty to use them, plus it don't feel so damn bad either. In Maine there's a lot of mischief in the lust. Not so far removed from the serpent and the apple; not so many middle motives. There's mischief in business too, if you come at them the wrong way. Eliot Elisofon couldn't get the plumbing to work in his new-bought house on Vinalhaven island. He called Fred Pickens, plumber, and asked him to come out, the way a New Yorker asks. A week later, after three more calls, he offered a bonus, "overtime," the way an American offers. Two weeks later he was in tears, fore and aft. If he'd gone in the first place and introduced himself to Fred, chatted some about weather, politics, fishing, offered Fred a little time, a human rhythm, Fred in due course would have said, "Somethin' I can do for ye?" And would have gone out and done it if it took an hour or a week, and not charged "enough." There's a kind of circuitous directness, as with real manners. And a spareness. You have to read eyes, cheek muscles, feet, to get a true reading. Generally, the more words the less the truth of it. They tend to be spare physically too. Lean. The men, not the women. I don't think northern women have a very good life. It's as hard as the men's but without that hand-to-hand combat with weather and sea that the men (usually) win almost every day, that gives them their right to walk with the others. The women, it seems, endure. Some wrung stringy, more gone lumpy with grease and potatoes. They pal around with each other, vote in self-defense against booze in local option elections which they win or lose and know it makes no real difference. I don't know if they fool around; I think they better not get caught if they do. They don't seem to have the same light in their eyes. That twinkle. When it's on, you never know for sure what they're up to. As when Mrs. Will asked Ray Fitch, caretaker of her seaside estate, to drown a fatally wounded kitten for her. A few yards away stood her new husband, the doctor. He always called himself Doctor. He was a chiropractor, who rarely manipulated his own bones. In less than a full summer he'd supplied to the locals the outline of a pompous buffoon. They filled it in. Ray, staring off at him while listening to Mrs. Will said all right, he'd drown the kitten. Then he turned to her, the twinkle came on. "For five dollars, I'll drown him too," he said, cocking his head at the new husband. The thing is, he was saying something. Mrs. Will's "Oh, no" had more than one meaning. She'd been summering in Maine since childhood; she wasn't surprised when Ray soon told her that he'd have to give up working for her, the fishing was using him up, and so forth. Untrue, of course. "It's best he's gone, though," she told me. "Another few weeks of taking orders from Allan and he would indeed have drowned him. For free," she added, a bit of that twinkle in her own eye. Maybe the weather gives them all the orders they can stand. Or that it's a different order of orders. You can take them without feeling bent. Whatever's in the nature of things is, was, will be. In respecting it, you somehow respect yourself. There's that northern pride in great storms and seas. "Wasn't she somethin' today, Henry?" "Ayuh, she's got the islands pushed around every which way." All those islands off the Maine coast. There's a lot of heavy thinking about islands in literature. Homer started it. You never know what outrageous shapes and snares you'll find when you land there. The Maine islands on the contrary are solace, balm, reassurance. Even coziness.

You don't look out on an empty sea, a vasty deep. The islands give your eye a place to land . . . and your boat if you should need it. They keep the sea down. They measure fog, appearing and disappearing and partly appearing as in fuzzy stills of silent films. On clear days they stand out there unmoving, green pines straight up from gray rock. Independent. Clean. One might want to be like them. One might want his bones to whiten there. To appear and disappear in the wavering fog. But not to be rained on. Rain seems unnecessary on the ocean, a bit silly, those determined drops. And always seems cold, even when it isn't. The color, probably, the water gone gray. A deep, flat gray, not like the fog, which always has some changing tones in it, some white or even a sensed pink mixing around in this or that patch. Maine fog is action painting. You can watch it for hours, like fire or water but not so hypnotically. It's more like reading, which is both hypnotic and self-aware at the same time. You watch the fog actively, peering here and there for the changings, but the body is napping. Sleep again. Sleep always comes into it. The sound of breakers, a salt breeze billowing the curtains—those clichés, unchanging, unimproved. You can't improve the ocean. You can't bring it up to date. For example, looking out at the sea the world is still flat. The waters stretch uninterrupted across space to the horizon line, where for the eye the world ends. Unless there's a tiny ship sitting way out there on the edge, like a target in a shooting gallery. Hit it and it won't sink, it will fall off the edge and down. The eye from shore sees a world that is vast and constant no matter where it looks, bounded by an unchanging horizon. The turbulent sea is unmoving in its constancy, restful as the moon-pulled movement of all waters. There is that tie with lulling, with limitless, sleep. Gulls on the sky wall, the hard day done and gone. No more of the gratuitous, all now is regularity, an absolute. Beyond forgiveness and forgetting. It comforts without meaning to, so you're not obliged. You watch it, you listen. Snugged in.

I got down to the dock just before closing time. Could he let me have four one-and-a-quarter pounders? Nod. He went out and netted them up from the pound. Bring a bucket, did ye? No, I didn't. We're outta boxes. There's that useless one over there. It was shallow cardboard, the top torn off. Better than nothing, I said. You could say that, he said. Did he mean *I* could say that? The four lobsters hardly fit into it. They kept scraggling around, trying to breathe, trying to eat each other. I love lobsters. Dead. Alive, they're frightening. Armor-plated, antennae waving, spidery swimming-legs, claws that could take your finger off if they weren't pegged or banded. Cannibals, they are. But I'm going to eat *them*. Bang, into the pot. Hateful. They wriggle, they curl. They were wriggling now as I started up the road, a quarter of a mile to go. I wasn't 500 yards along when the box began to leak all over me. (Lobsters are full of sea-water.) I wasn't half way there when the bottom of the box dissolved. For a brief moment I had four live and furious lobsters in my bare arms. I don't know if I yelled Yech! but I dropped these cold monsters as if they were on fire. No damage done. Not to them. They started crawling backwards, forwards, sideways. One was headed into the brush, another toward the bank, the rocks, the water. The other two were going straight up the road. The road, for godsake! A car could come around the bend. What would I do? Shout "*Don't run over the lobsters!*"? I'd be famous on the island for weeks. I darted after the one going toward the rocks. Got him. (Very carefully, behind the ears, the claws.) Good for me. Now, what was I to do with him? I might steel myself to hold on (he was wriggling like a snake), get another in my other hand. And then what? What was I to do with the others? I thought maybe I could herd the two on the road, sort of like a sheep dog, keep them going in the right direction. So I picked up the one in the bush, caught up with the other two, began nudging them with my foot, turn in turn, up the road. Then an awful thought hit. Their hunting claws were banded with a thick elastic. Suppose the road wore into the elastic, and it snapped? And I went nudging in with a sneaker? It would be a Vincent Price movie, the lobster pulling me home, to *his* home. They don't let go. What could I kill it with? Maybe a car would come, I could stick out my foot and let the car run over it, run over the lobster, run over both the foot and the lobster? This was ridiculous. We were going along at maybe a hundred yards an hour, the four lobsters and I. I tried to nudge one of them along, but got him turned sideways, and off he went toward the brush. When I nudged him again I turned him over. And couldn't re-turn him. Remember, I had only my feet free. If I put one lobster down, picked up the overturned one? Yes, I could do that. But I put down the one that knew which way the rocks and water were, and he immediately took off in that direction. I kicked him back onto the road, gave him a good cursing. When the inevitable car came around the bend I was furious. "Stop, godammit!" I shouted, waving my arms like a cop, lobsters hanging from my hands. My luck persisted. It was Clarence Arey, lobsterman. His jaw fell, he hit the brakes. I pointed a lobster down at the road, at another of the lobsters. He looked, leaned out the window, nodded, blew his horn hard and pretended to start up. Then he flopped over the steering wheel and started shaking with laughter. One of the lobsters crawled underneath the car. . . . —*Kenneth Lash*

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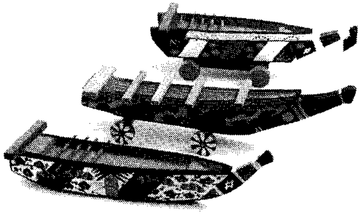

Eye on the Whale: A Japanese Perspective

The motor on the small boat didn't start immediately. But the old man tried it again. And again. Until finally we were heading out away from the docks, the other boats, the great piles of rose-colored nets; heading out toward the open sea. Yet we didn't really leave the land behind, for the community of Kayoi came down so very close to the shore. Even now, as houses gave way to rock and pine, the sense of the town's overhanging eaves and dark interiors stayed with me. The rocks, enormous, knobbed, and sculpted, and the pines, stunted, on either side of the bay, stood as guardians to the town; they'd obviously taken the full brunt of years of storms. As we moved out toward the sea, these grotesque rocks and this rough greenery sheltered us, too, for a while. Waves were becoming ocean swells now, and we were coming down hard on the water; spray was flying back at us from the boat's prow. It was cold.

The motor was up full-speed, maybe up to ten miles per hour; the old man—Hayakawa Genichi—was talking at a greater speed. Yes, he remembered how they used to go out, sometimes as many as twenty boats, with ten or twelve men to each. It was cold then, too, this time of year, but you could count on the water always being colder than the air. And each man had to be prepared to get into the water. So if they wore anything when they went whaling, it was short, thick kimonos which could be flung off in an instant, and they kept their hair long and in a double top-knot; in case they should be thrown overboard, someone could haul them in more easily with such a top-knot. Sure, you might be tossed in, if the whale came at you from underneath or turned his flukes on you. But you had to be ready, too, to go into the water to put in the final lance. Or, carrying the knife between your teeth, you had to be ready to swim up to the dead creature, and make the slit in his snout so that the rope which would connect him to the lead boats could be run through. And all the while the other whales would be raging about, bellowing for the dead one. "And several times," Hayakawa-san said, "men had seen tears in the eyes of a dying whale."

There were four of us in the boat. Hayakawa-san, the NHK TV man doing a story on the survival of whaling songs in Yamaguchi prefecture; Yanai-san, a student from the University of Hiroshima, who'd brought me to this small fishing community on Aomi Island in Yamaguchi. Each of us was silent as the motor spit, and the small boat slammed down against the swells, and we caught snatches of the old man's reminiscences. "A whale's tears." The memory and the image seemed to burden us all with a knowledge of loss, of the need for pity. (Yet a friend, a long-time conservationist—the term used before "ecologist" came into vogue—was offended when I wrote her about those tears. "Pure sentimentality," she wrote back. "Those whales were being exterminated.") The boat came down hard, and the water which dashed over us was a relief. We could respond to the immediate, re-adjust our scarves and re-arrange ourselves on the narrow seats on the boat.

I still had the feeling that we were backed by shore although we had only a few bits of islands and open sea ahead. Three or four larger boats were coming in. They, too, were unpainted, made of rough planks, curved like Hayakawa-san's small boat toward a sharp, uplifted prow, and smoothed to a luminous grey by weather and water. A whale boat might be a cross between these fishing smacks and Hayakawa-san's small boat, I suspected. The larger boats were strung with ramshackle lines and bulbs for night fishing. A dozen or so men stood about in the center of each boat, one man with his hand to the great tiller at the rear. Some of them hailed the old man. "They catch mostly squid now," he said. "Sometimes there's a run of bonito, flounder, or mackerel, but there's always squid." If the day was good—not like today, too many clouds—he'd take his boat out alone and would be able to bring in a few bream. "The whales don't run anymore, you know," he thought to add. Some porpoise, sure, but the last time a whale had been spotted was in 1966—a six-meter right whale, it was, and it passed right by. Anyhow, whaling in the old way had stopped in Kayoi pretty much about the time of the Russo-Japanese War.

Most of the nets were taken away at the time of the war and, after all, everything had depended on the nets. A man might own his harpoons, lances, and knives, but the nets were communal property. It was seldom that there was a single man rich enough to own nets, and everybody took care of them, men and women both. (Yamada Yosei, in his 1829 book, *Illustrations of Whaling,* points out that "A whaling outfit consisted of three sets of thirty-eight nets, each net having a length of twenty-eight fathoms and becoming eighteen fathoms square when spread out."[1]) In some places, Hayakawa-san said, the nets were made of wisteria vine, but in Kayoi they were hemp, and dipped and dyed in pig's blood for strengthening. But the admirals took them away during the Russo-Japanese War and strung them underwater, across harbors up and down the Japan Sea-side of the country. Hayakawa-san supposed that if the nets were tough enough to stop whales, they'd be tough enough to stop Russian warships, too. Traditional whaling would have ended anyway, because the big Norwegian harpoon-guns were being developed and used. And ships started going out for months at a time. The last net-whaling in all Japan was done off the Yamaguchi coast in 1909. So the nets disappeared, and then, gradually, the whales.

(I learned more about these nets later. Several whaling cultures had tried using them at one time or another, but none had succeeded like the Japanese, for none were quite so well organized. While the net boats, six to ten in a whaling fleet, would stretch out the nets between them, the chasing boats, as many as twenty, would come up behind the whale, two men in each boat throwing harpoons and eight to ten rowing and rhythmically beating the sides of the boat in order to frighten the whale into the nets ahead. The nets would then not only entangle the wounded whale in their meshes, but they would also prevent his final sinking, a factor of some importance if the whale was thin or a rorqual, which characteristically sinks and which some cultures, depending only on bladders and floats in their whaling, were thus never able to bring to shore. So important a part of the Japanese whaling enterprise was the net that its exact origin is still being debated. Legend has it that the sister of a well-known Nagasaki whaler, to help her brother, first conceptualized the net by watching the way a spider trapped its prey in its web. At Koganji Temple in Kayoi, a tradition is nourished that the nets were first used in a dream.[2] Most likely, however, the use of nets for whaling evolved by analogy with other types of seine fishing. The use of the nets was in any case perfected in Taiji, and one Wada Kakuemon and his descendants traveled about Japan, going as far as the Goto archipelago, off the coast of Nagasaki, to teach the ways of net-whaling.)

Hayakawa-san had told the NHK TV man that he would take him out of Kayoi Bay to see where the whales used to run, and we'd been coming steadily out until now I had the sense we were simply a small boat on the infinitely expanding sea. That sense wasn't denied by Yanai-san's saying, "Over there, that way, that's Korea," for that way lay only more swelling sea and heavy sky. Hayakawa-san stared straight ahead. "Look!" he shouted, quite suddenly. I couldn't at first see the change in the sea's surface, and in the sea's color. But then I did. "It's just like a whale," he said, standing up now in the stern of the boat and pointing. A massive grey form seemed to be rising out of the water off to starboard. The sea pitched itself against it, was repelled, the waters unrolling like a great white scroll and then springing back upon themselves, black and green hieroglyphs set free and flung out into space. A frenetic motion, the leap forward and the repulsion; yet we could see behind the fragmentation and the frenzy of the water the huge patient form of the boulder. Like a whale which would not be worn down by wind and water. Submerged when the tide was up, but rising when the waters began to sink, as steady in its appearance in the bay as a whale's spouting and as wonderful. Hayakawa-san turned the motor off; we drifted.

Hayakawa Genichi's reminiscences and his reaction to the apparition of the whale set my search in motion. Having intended at first merely to make a cursory inspection of the traditional Japanese whaling operation, I now found myself trying to penetrate that "impenetrable Japan" by looking at the whale itself with the eyes of the old Japanese whaler. Consequently, I had to travel through the unknown archipelago of Japan, to talk with many people, to track down the whale's image in pre-modern Japanese books, scrolls, wood-block prints, tombstones, toys. The Japanese vision of the whale before industrialization, the vision which I finally approached, was complex. Inevitably, that vision reflected the economic, social, aesthetic, and religious systems of the traditional culture.

Following my meeting with Hayakawa-san, I found much more to learn about the whale in Kayoi. As it did in other Japanese coastal communities, organized whaling started in Kayoi in the early seventeenth century. Because it prospered here as a commercial enterprise, it came under the protection of the powerful Mori clan. The whalers themselves were given certain privileges—permission to wear short swords and to put clay walls up around their homes—walls that were allowed usually only to the daimyo-class, never to the fisherman-class. The slaughter of whales, then, was the basis for pride and pomp in pre-modern Kayoi. But it doesn't seem that such privilege aroused the community's vanity. I learned that the whales themselves—the whales and their dying—caused humility to co-exist with pride in this community. And they still do.

Overlooking the town, the bay, and the sea is Koganji (The Temple Facing the Rock), built in 1390, active at the height of the community's whaling prosperity and active now. On the altar of the temple's great hall stand several onyx tablets, inscribed in gold, and in front of these lie three scrolls wrapped in faded brocade. The inscriptions on the tablets are the posthumous Buddhistic names for several whales; the scrolls, covering the years between the middle of the seventeenth century and the middle of the eighteenth, are necrologies of slain whales. To the north of the temple stands a monument—it is taller than Yanai-san, who stood before it, reading the characters off to me—marking the grave of a fetus taken from a mother whale in 1695; it is said that the fetus had been wrapped carefully for burial in a straw mat. (In Goto, I learned that the fetuses were wrapped in short ceremonial kimonos, and in Kochi, in children's clothing.) The son of the temple priest, also on vacation from school, told me it was too bad I couldn't come to Koganji for the annual two-day ceremony for the whales in February. Since 1679 the ceremony, a memorial service for the souls of the whales and for their continuing happiness in the after-life, has been held at the temple. The sutras chanted are the same as those chanted for humankind.

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[1] Yamada's very full account of whaling in Ikitsuki Island from his book *Isana-toru Edotoba* ("Illustrations of Whaling") appears in partial translation in *The Whale,* ed. Leonard Harrison (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1968), pp. 106-113. The discussion of the nets occurs on p. 108.

[2] These legends are set down in the pamphlet printed for Koganji, entitled "Aomijima Kujira Haka to Koganji Ryakkuengi" ("Aomi Island Whale Graves and the Origins of Koganji") and in Nakahara Masao's *Kujira Hyakuwa* ("A Hundred Stories About Whales") (Shimonoseki: Nishi Nippon Koiku Tosho, 1973), pp. 50-51.

Behind the tablets, the necrologies, the grave-marker, and the ceremony lies the fundamental recognition on the part of the Buddhistic whalers that their livelihood was predicated on the destruction of the whales' lives. Man was not created to rule over the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea: this the whalers knew. Yet on each whaling trip, they took the lives of those great sea creatures. And what was worse, those creatures seemed so like themselves. The women and old folk who stayed on shore when the whalers were off, they had all seen it: the sea colored red with blood and washing up on shore, as if, they said, to the very eaves of their houses. The whalers themselves returned with amazing reports. Hayakawa-san had known men who'd seen the whales' tears and heard the whales' cries of grief at the loss of a mate or an offspring. It was also reported that who once had heard the dying whale's cry would hear it through eternity. The whalers declared, too, that the grieving whale, swimming so frantically around the nets and among the flashing harpoons must not be killed, a regulation somewhat different from that of pragmatic Taiji which declared that harpooners who killed baby whales, but allowed the mothers to escape, would be dismissed from the fleet for a year.[3]

Perceiving the whales as sharing in life like themselves, as subject to similar emotions—rage, grief, love—and as subject to death, the community of Kayoi offered the spirit of the dead whale the same rites they offered their own dead. The official pamphlet for visitors to Koganji suggests that a possible preface to the necrologies would indicate that just as human souls can be reached when the requiem for the dead is recited, so the souls of the dead whales can be reached if the requiem is recited for them. The same pamphlet also spells out the meaning of the monument for the dead fetus; it is an epitaph and an apology to those whales who had died before birth: "Baby whales, your lives ended with the death of your mothers. Our purpose was not in taking you, baby whales. We would have wanted you free in the depths of the sea. But now you will never swim there free. Please listen, you whale babies. We want you to have the blessing of a Buddhistic mass so that you, too, may achieve *satori*." The pamphlet is not beyond proselytizing: "The beautiful faith that the whalers have in the whales' blissful after-life and the love which their faith suggests will touch anyone." A contemporary writer, Terayama Shuji, recognizing the possibility of sentimentality and self-justification in the tributes of the Kayoi whaling community, argues that Koganji's monuments and ceremonies finally express an inevitable and tragic truth. The struggle between the whales and the whalers being one of life and death, the whales were killed so that men could live, but Terayama goes on to say that the death of the whales signaled man's own defeat, that the victimizer would become the victim. The whalers, too, would die; buried in the same earth as the whales, they would, according to Terayama, touch hand to shoulder forever.[4] Albeit Terayama's is a contemporary view, without the trappings of the pamphlet's Jodoshu Buddhism, it still underscores the sense that the whale to the traditional Japanese whaling community was a powerful force of life—if it sustained human life, it simultaneously reminded human beings of their own mortality.

On return from Kayoi, I found a friend's letter waiting to tell me that I must visit the whaling museum in Taiji, a town in Wakayama prefecture on the Pacific-side of Japan. Billed as "Whale City" in tourist brochures and featuring a hot spring in addition to performing seals and porpoises, Taiji now is attempting to continue to profit from a history of perceiving and using the whale as object and product. During the annual All-Souls Festival in mid-August, Taiji honors the souls of slain whales with massive memorial tablets set on the altars of two temples, but acknowledgement of the whale's soul seems perfunctory here, while in Kayoi I'd been made to feel that that soul is addressed on a day-to-day basis. In Taiji, on a day-to-day basis, the whale is dissected and flensed, his skull and bones hung on the first floor of the museum and his guts and private parts embalmed or lacquered on the third floor.

Taiji has a wide, graciously curving bay; its arms stretch far out to embrace a calm sea. My friend Matsui-san and I looked down at the bay from a road circling above the town where the cherry trees were in bloom. In the morning light, the blossoms further softened the scene below. This was not the jagged shore and cramped harbor of Kayoi. Whales might well come in to frolic in such pleasant-seeming waters. We walked down the road to the shipyard; here several hulks, tied to a quay, seemed easefully sinking and rotting back in the opaque waters. Squatting at the edge of a rock, three children were sending *origami* ships out to sea. They didn't notice us.

With Wada Chubeiyorimoto organizing Taiji's harpooners into effective fleets in 1606 and with Wada Kakuemon developing the use of the net-method of catching whales in 1675, Taiji's whaling enterprise has a long and distinguished history. As in most Japanese coastal fishing communities, small whales—occasionally a large one—were caught in Wakayama and nearby Mie prefectures as early as the eleventh century, but no other whaling area developed its whaling techniques with the rapidity and success of Taiji. In the 1680s, Wada Kakuemon II was traveling to the distant archipelago of Goto and to the outpost of Tosa (modern Kochi) to instruct other coastal communities in the net-method.[5] Although the records are spotty, it can be estimated that during this period when net-whaling was being developed in Taiji, an average of 90 whales was taken annually. Taiji prospered so greatly that whales were regularly sent up to the shogun in Edo (modern Tokyo) as tribute, and the artifacts in the Taiji museum, where we'd gone from the shipyard, reflect a luxurious standard of living unequalled by other traditional Japanese whaling communities. If the whale was the means for the community's livelihood and nourishment, it was also the means for the community's aggrandizement. Not deemed woundrous in itself, the whale in Taiji was the means for specific ends: wealth and prestige.

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[3] For this and subsequent references to whaling in Taiji, I am indebted to the exhaustive study of whaling in that community in particular and in Japan in general, compiled by Shimonaka Kunihiko in *Kumano Taiji Ura Hogeishi* ("The Whaling History of Taiji Bay in Kumano") (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1969). A description of the punishment to whalers who killed young or female whales is discussed on p. 396.

[4] Terayama Shuji's essay is entitled "Kujira Reii-ki" ("A Record of a Miracle of Whales"), pp. 176-184, and is located in a travel journal published in 1974.

Hanging from the ceiling of the three-story museum is a replica of a traditional Japanese whaling boat manned with life-sized figures. Few of the actual boats are extant, though I could see clearly now that the flat-bottomed, weather-beaten boats of Kayoi with their curved prows resembled their whale-boat prototypes. Among Taiji's records is a scroll illustrating in detail the Taiji whaling fleet, 39 boats in all, of which ten are net boats, six carrier boats for bringing home the whale, and the remainder chasing boats—each boat 13 meters in length and suitable for carrying eight oars and up to a dozen men. The wider, more squat net boats are less flamboyant than the chaser boats with their borders of chrysanthemums and cherry blossoms and broad diagonal bands of orange-and-black, blue-and-white which seem to thrust them across the page of the scroll. The lead boat is decorated with a fabulous bird of paradise and good fortune, and the carrier boats are decorated with fat bags of gold. The museum boat is painted with equal brilliance, and the sense I had, just standing beneath it, was that it was made for glory. Though in other Japanese scrolls and pictures of traditional whaling scenes, the boats seem small, fragile in comparison to the whale, this Taiji boat loomed large and certain over us.

When the whale in Taiji was not a means to a material end, it was a matter of curiosity. Analyzed anatomically and historically and statistically as it has been at Taiji over years, it can fill cases and shelves and charts. On the second floor of the museum we saw lengthy medieval scrolls, one a perfect cetology, classifying the types of whales—the sei, the grey, the finback, the humpback, the sperm, the right—each perfectly drawn with parts labeled, with another scroll showing first the whale x-rayed with organs and bone structure exposed and then dissected with the best cuts identified and the tools for dismemberment drawn in nearby. We saw books published in the eighteenth century mapping the location of various kinds of whales and discussing the differences among types of whales, as to size, length, shape, peculiarities. We saw spears, harpoons, knives, and saws—all used in killing and cutting the whale; we saw flags for use on land to identify the number and type of whales spotted at sea, and flags for use in the whaling boats to signal other boats, and pompoms for use in directing and encouraging the beaters and rowers in the chasing boats. Up on the third floor we saw the whale's ears, kidney, anus, brain, vagina, heart, intestines, tongue, windpipe, spiracle hole, uterus, and fetus: all in bottles. (I remembered another unborn whale wrapped in a straw mat.) We saw a larger, grey lump of ambergris. We saw a case of luxury items made in the old days from the whale: perfume, jelly, mechanical dolls, seals, pipes, carvings, and a portable pillow. For Taiji, the whale's material being had very clearly been the basis for great material well-being.

In 1756, the people of Taiji found themselves in desperate straits; the whales seemed to have vanished from their seas. Hearing of the powers of the high priest at Zuikoji, a Zen temple in distant Osaka, they sent emissaries to ask that he pray for a large fish to be brought their way. Their mission was successful, for they reaped a great whale harvest that year, and the grateful people sent a bundle of whale jaw and shoulder bones to the temple. Out of pity for the whales he had prayed dead, the priest commissioned a graceful bridge built with the bones over the pond in front of his temple. The day was hot and dusty when I visited Zuikoji, located now in the industrial outskirts of a modern megapolis. An altar, burdened with summer fruits and round rice cakes, had been set up in front of the bridge to commemorate its construction 200 years before. The whale's shoulder bones fanning upward from the sides of the bridge and the jaw bones curving over them as railings, have become grey and porous with time; they seemed both firm and frail, and very unlike a whale. Brought far inland and preserved in this courtyard while the surrounding fields were giving way to freeways and factories, the bones might magically have conjured up open seas and the lovely gliding forms of whales, spindrift and strange fountains. But on that early summer afternoon the "Snowy Whale Bridge" at Zuikoji seemed only an odd bridge over a stagnant pond, a receipt for goods received. The priest's and the whalers' impulses toward piety seemed to have dissipated altogether.

There is a story which is told in Kayoi and which I learned has come into general Japanese folklore when a friend in the political science department at the University of Hiroshima mentioned to me that he had heard it from his mother as a boy. A certain wealthy whaler had a dream in which a large female whale appeared. She informed him that tomorrow when he went whaling, she would be accompanying her sickly child into warmer wa-

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[5] The history of the development of whaling in Taiji is conveniently set in a chronology in *Kumano Taiji Ura Hogeishi*, pp. 629-632. The estimate for whale catches from 1615 and 1703 is based on figures gleaned from pp. 276, 285, and 303.

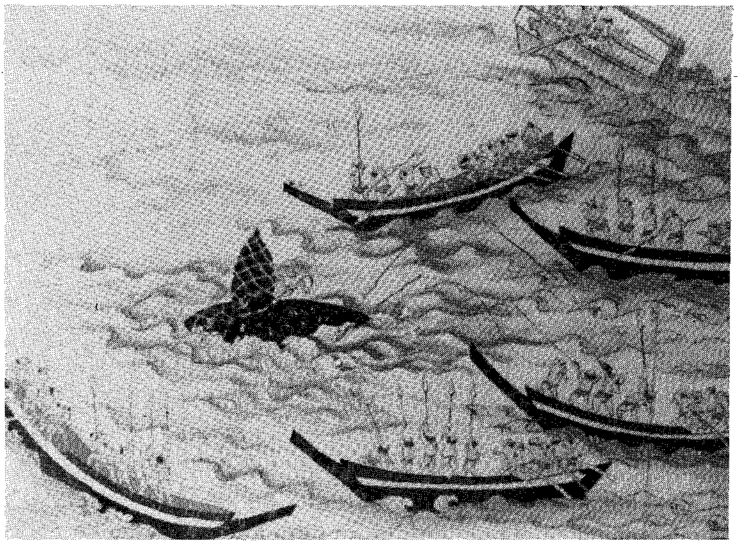
ters. On the following day, the man and his fellow whalers did indeed spy an enormous whale swimming slowly ahead of them with a young whale by its side. Rather than taking the dream as a warning, however, the man chose to interpret it as an opportunity for increasing his wealth and consequently encouraged the harpooners and net-throwers to row faster to overtake the two whales. The whales didn't escape, but neither did the man of wealth. Following the slaughter of the two whales, so the tale goes, the man's fortunes declined: he lost not only his wealth, but most significantly his son and only child.[6]

The tale has the facility of a moral fable about the dangers of greed, but it serves as an appropriate conclusion to the story of traditional whaling in Taiji. On December 24, 1878, the Taiji fleet, attempting to bring to shore an enormous whale during a storm, was almost entirely destroyed. Over 100 whalers were lost. Subsequently many Taiji families fell on hard times, and net-whaling could never be fully revived. Although about 150 men still go out annually from Taiji to the Antarctic whaling grounds, the great days of boats decorated with cherry blossoms disappeared when it was no longer possible to draw up riches by hand from the sea.

Taiji's fall is probably most dramatic because most visible, because more people and more goods were involved, and Taiji's emphatically materialistic approach to the whale was by no means an isolated phenomenon in pre-modern Japan. Other communities, however, demonstrate vividly not only that whaling was a way of life for the entire community, but also that the whale itself was a vitalizing part of the community. The long scrolls produced on Ogawa Island, off the coast of Saga prefecture, and Kashiwa, a small community on the largest island in the Goto archipelago, reveal just how fully, how completely human community life was dependent upon the whale. Drawn with the most careful of detail, both the Ogawa and the Goto scrolls were decidedly meant for communal use. The Ogawa scroll, which prefaces each picture by verbal explanation and additional pertinent information, was commissioned in 1773 by a father for use by his sons; the Goto scroll, which dates between 1830 and 1844, was commissioned by a lord of Nagasaki in the interests of avoiding legal difficulties regarding the catching of whales and the distribution of whale meat. Late in the summer I took the train south to Kyushu in search of both scrolls, the Ogawa scroll at the Saga Prefectural Museum and the Goto scroll at the Nagasaki Prefectural Library.[7] As each scroll was unwound in front of me, I was pulled step-by-step into the communal life of the people of these small islands. The first scene on both scrolls is of the island itself in its geographical relationship to Kyushu and other nearby islands. The seas were pastures for the land; they were not unknown, extending outward to ever remote horizons. Whatever was done at sea was done with an eye to the well-known and well-labeled land to which all boats returned. For the Japanese whaler, there was no two- to six-year voyage out on the open waters, and his community was not one comprised almost solely of men. At night the Japanese whaler went home to his wife and children, his mother and father. I realized that the island itself was his whaleship, his life-long home on the seas.

Unrolled a little more, the scrolls revealed the hilltop lookout, a small hut with windows facing the sea. Here men kept watch for whales: the mast-head of the island-ship. Spotting whales in the waters below, they sent large straw-mat banners up on two tall poles, beat drums, and set bonfires burning, having a variety of signals to indicate to the men waiting by the shore exactly how many and what kinds of whales had been seen. A certain excitement characterizes both drawings of the hilltop lookout as the mats billow forth and the smoke from the fires leaps upward.

This excitement is carried over into the more extensive scenes in which the whales are actually being pursued and captured. A dozen boats race across the paper, each boat filled with men rowing forward and a leader in each boat gesturing, encouraging, and propelling them onward. I found I was cheering both the whalers and the whale. In the Goto scroll, the whale, spouting and cavorting in the froth, seems detached from the onslaught of prows pointed its way. The great nets are thrown out in sweeping arcs around several other whales, and the harpoons have begun to fly. Someone is in the water. I immediately thought of Hayakawa-san. But, no, there were no tears here although the whale spouts thick blood in the Ogawa scroll. In neither picture does the whale



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[6] This legend is noted in the Koganji pamphlet as well as in Richard Gordon Smith's *Ancient Tales and Folklore of Japan* (London: A. & C. Black, 1908), pp. 200-201. Frank Hawley in his painstaking study of historical documents related to the whales of Japan and the Japanese whale-fisheries [*Whales and Whaling in Japan*, Vol. I of *Miscellanea Japanica* II (Kyoto: Kawakita Press, 1958-59)] notes a comparable tale, told by the old nurse of one Koana Ryuichi in *The Whales Come to Worship* ("Kujira no Omairi"): "You must know that at a certain fishing village, some 30 whales, of the length of a grown man lying stretched out, were caught by a fisherman, who cut them up into pieces about a foot long, and sold them to get money. All that night he slept none, for he was seized with a fever; and when his family asked that prayers be made to heal his sickness, they were told by the priest that the whales, stopped from worshipping at the shrine of Hachiman, had brought a curse upon him. Yet nevertheless, the priest went on to say, the souls of the dead whales would be appeased if a memorial tablet were set up to comfort them. This was done; and the fisherman thereafter recovered," p. 152.

[7] The Goto scroll is discussed as well in the following magazine article: "Kujira-tori" ("Catching Whales"), *Kurashina Techo*, No. 92 (Winter, 1967), pp. 34-45.

itself seem the dynamic force. There's a fluke here, a tail there. The vigorous and well-organized boat crews are decidedly in control of the action; yet it's evident, I thought, that the cause of all this action is the black hump off there in the waters.

In both scrolls the dead whale is strapped between two boats and accompanied by the other jubilant boats into the shore. On the beach several large winches wait to pull the whales up onto the shore where the dismemberment will be done. Behind the winches are the gateway and walls of the whaling factory, and behind these are the warehouses for rope, salt, tendons, flukes, oil, skulls, the repair shops for the nets and boats, the cutting and boiling sheds, the smithies, and the factory headquarters. Once the whale was on shore, the winches were then put to use peeling back the whale's blubber and flesh. In the Goto scroll, three whales are shown in different stages of being stripped; in the Ogawa scroll there is one whale. The blubber is turned back like pages in a book, as if the whale could be read and comprehended by all these men with hooks and long flensing swords. Beached, with jaw and flukes detached and the flesh reduced to black and white rectangles, the whale has lost all wholeness. The shores in the scroll are thronged with people, men turning the winches, cutting into the whale, separating flesh from fat, hauling the blocks of fat and meat up to the preparation rooms, simply standing by, observing; women and children come by to chat or to try to steal a piece of meat and are caught in the act by the wary flensers and sent scuttling off. The water reddens in both scrolls and the scavenger birds—kites, seagulls, albatross—come in for their fill.

The Ogawa scroll then goes on to identify in pictures and charts the kinds of whales, cetological anatomy, the demarcation of the cuts, the proper measurement of the cuts, the costs for certain cuts with information regarding those which are best for eating, the tools for dismemberment and for making oil. I'd seen all this before, but not in one scroll. Here, too, the whaler's pay scales are spelled out: how much they're to be allotted in rice, *sake,* soy sauce, and whale meat, the division of profits being entirely in food. In the Goto scroll these matters are explicitly written out and dramatized as well; but rather than giving us charts of the anatomy and of the cuts, it shows the prime cuts being made, the sinews and tendons being cleaned and dried. It also shows all the separate stages in the processes of making the oil, grinding the bone, and preparing the meat for communal distribution. At every stage—whether it's the sawing of the gigantic bones or the feeding of furnaces for the oil vats, the removing of sinews from bones or the final weighing of the by now small bits of red meat—the work proceeds with obvious order and energy. While some workers have particular responsibilities, others are part of specialized crews, and still others work in long rows to the rhythm of the drumbeater. The whale is no longer visible among the swarms of people. Its bones and organs and flesh have become obscure, abstract objects to be hoisted and heaved; yet I understood that the whale had brought this harmonious engagement of old, young, men, women, blue kimono, red kimono into being. So completely had the human world absorbed the vigor of the natural world in these final factory scenes on the Goto scroll, I felt the whale had been made into a thousand loaves and fishes.

Only two parts of the whale's anatomy are not subjected to processing in the factory in the Goto scroll: a vagina and a penis. Each organ has become the center of a circle of amazed and curious folk, their own sexual fantasies obviously aroused at the sight of such imposing organs. A group of men seem to be dancing about the vagina, all thrusting their arms forward toward the wondrous object. The penis is surrounded by an active crowd: two singing, extravagantly gesticulating men, a man pulling toward it three shy ladies who hide their eyes with their kimono sleeves, two other apparently bolder women, a couple beginning a relationship by sharing a pipe, and three wildly delighted naked children. The spirit of these drawings is joyous. Although lacking written explanation and taken out of context of the scroll, the vagina and penis, set as they are in their rounds of black skin and white blubber, wouldn't be recognized; the whales seem not to have been desecrated or mocked by this display of their private parts, but instead to nourish through their deaths a dionysiac spirit of life in the human community.

This spirit imbues the final scenes of both scrolls: the annual celebration of the whale hunt. Lanterns are lit, trays of food are stacked high, drums are beaten, and the whalers are dancing round, singing and laughing. A man's celebration, but nonetheless women and children peer eagerly in at the windows. Yamada describes the Ikitsuki festivals as follows:

> Each of the catchers, who look as strong as wrestlers, wears a towel round his head, opens his arms, takes a long step, dances, sings congratulations and greetings and mimes the catching of the whale. Many women and children gather round to see the dance. It is very funny to watch the scene in which they criticize skill or lack of it by pointing the finger, exchanging glances and chattering to each other. What a majestic sight it is![8]

Both scrolls include songs, with the Ogawa scroll prefacing the picture of the celebration with explanations of the dances, the dance-wear, the place and time of the dance as well. The songs praise the whaling crew, the head of the whaling operation, and their luck; the communal life, the whales' lives, and the hunting of the whales are part of an eternal cycle as a Goto song suggests:

> Years pass by, but in the bay of Waka, whaling goes on.
> Whales born of whales bear other whales and go on.
> Fathers, mothers, let's go after whales in the morning.
> A thousand good blessings, ten-thousand good blessings.

Memories of the whale and the way of life which it envigorated continue to sustain the community on Ogawa Island. In mid-August I took the early morning ferry to Ogawa from the Yobiko harbor which was crowded with a variety of well-rigged fishing boats and bustling with fishermen loading their gear. An hour later, the harbor at Ogawa was in repose. A few women carrying baskets and bundles of goods for sale came down the ramp with me; two junior high school boys in uniform crossed over. I stepped down the stone embankment piled high with barnacled octopus pots and asked the way to the post-office. With no cars on the island, the roads were all pathways, and all of them led up and down, for the town is built on a rock projecting up from the sea. Cats were lounging

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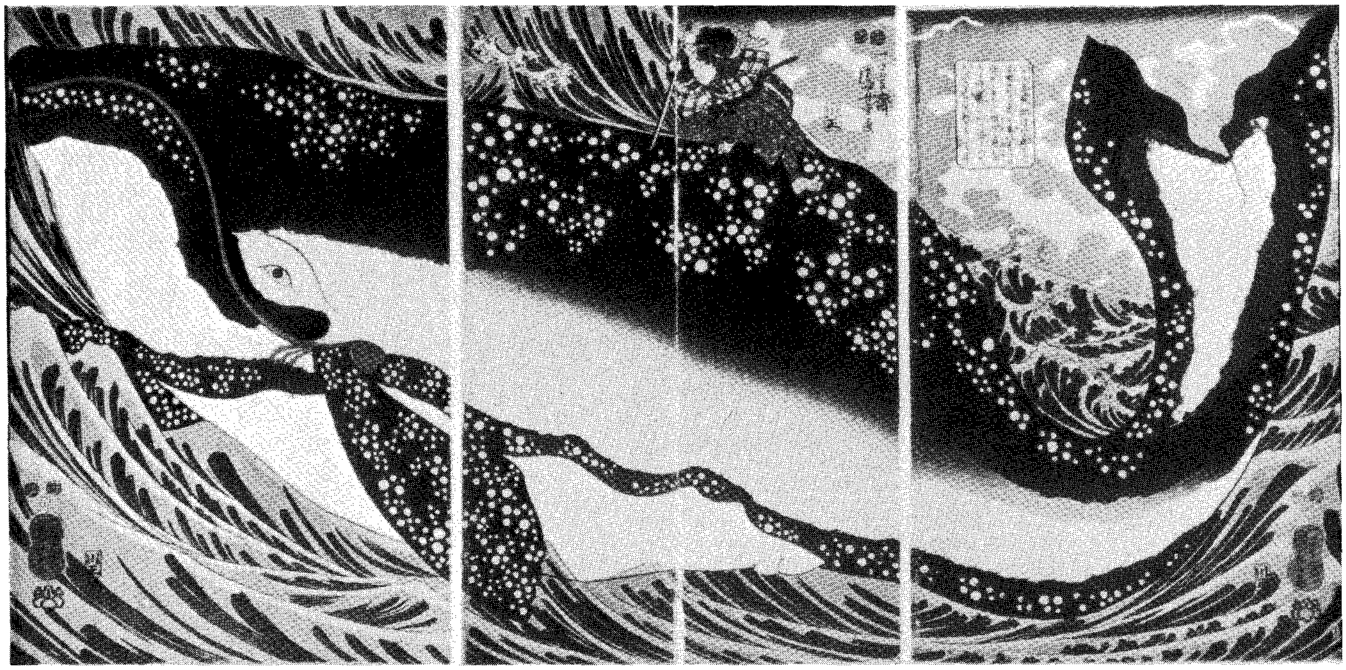
[8] *The Whale,* p. 113.



about everywhere in the sun: in the paths, on cast-off crates, on the low walls in front of the houses. Sure sign of a fishing village, I thought. The post-office, which wasn't far from the docks, is a room in a house occupied by the postmaster, Yoshikawa Yasushi, and his family. Not busy just then, Yoshikawa-san welcomed me to come back to the family's rooms and have tea. All of his people and his wife's people, too, I learned immediately, were fisherfolk and had been whalers before that. It's all octopus now in Ogawa, however, and, like Kayoi, there's always squid.

Still, Yoshikawa-san said, the old whaling places were there, and he'd take me to see them. We walked back to the small port, completely quiet with the ferry gone, and followed a shore road to the wide beach where once the whaling factory had stood and the whales were hauled up to become food and oil. A number of lean-tos and boat garages stand here now, back from the sand, and I could see the skeletons of several boats looming in the interior shadows, but no one seemed then to be working on them. Yoshikawa-san knew where the winches had once stood, and he pointed out an enormous stone mortar, now a natural bird basin, which had been used for grinding whale-bone into bone-meal fertilizer for the rice-fields. The last whaling done here, Yoshikawa-san told me, was in 1909; there are no remnants of either boat or net left. He pointed out a statue of Ebisu off to one side of the beach. There Ebisu sat, on a pile of lava rocks, beneath a small gabled roof, a fat, smirking fellow, god of all businesses and especially the business of fishing; there he sat clutching a large sea-bream beneath his pudgy arm. Geraniums bloomed all about him and fresh offerings—some rice and *sake*—had been set before him today. That he was still here—more silly than benign on this abandoned beach—suggested that some people continued to recognize him as a living force and the sea as the source of infinite blessings.

We made our way up to the elementary school, a modern building with about 130 students when it was in session, though the number was decreasing year-by-year. Here, along with displays of pressed leaves and fading silk kimonos, was a collection of whale bones, cutting tools, and a rusted harpoon-gun. Some years ago, Yoshikawa-san explained, the sixth-grade students had taken it upon themselves to re-discover their history, had gone about collecting these things, and had written up a brief account of the island. "Whaling is our heritage," they set out on the first page. Calling my attention to a whale bone, Yoshikawa-san said, "You can find it anywhere on the island. Anybody who plants a field runs into it. I'll show you." And sure enough, as we were going back down, he poked at what seemed only porous stones in the walls alongside the steps, but were really whale vertebrae.

On the way down, coming back to the center of the community, we stopped at a small temple. Grey wood and grey tiles, and all around it were grey tombs; the greyness was because of their having been washed by rain and dried by sun and perhaps occasionally silvered and speckled by salt spray. Bright circles of yellow and green lichen embroidered all this grey, and with the blue sky above and the blue sea stretching out below, of all cemeteries I've been in this was the most reposed. Certainly the least self-conscious. Here whales and whalers do touch hand and shoulder, for the tombs of Ogawa's whaling families as well as memorial stones for a humpback whale, a right whale, a finback whale, and a whale couple are crowded together in this small courtyard. Unlike the tomb at Koganji which stands alone, overlooking the sea, these tombs, though larger than the others in the cemetery and set just beneath the temple's eaves, exactly duplicate the tombs of Yoshikawa-san's ancestors.

We left the cemetery to climb up again, this time pushing aside tangled grass, weeds, and bamboo to follow a narrow flight of stone steps. Yoshikawa-san went first, trying to keep the long horse-tail grasses from snapping back in my face. It was hot, and a whirr of insects filled the dense green. Sky was just visible overhead. We passed a small Kannon statue with an empty *sake* cup in front of her and kept on climbing. Yoshikawa-san was waiting for me farther up. He stood at the threshold of a rather dilapidated hut. Ushering me in, he told me that this was the last remaining hilltop lookout for whales in all of Japan. Inside, the mud walls were crumbling, the floorboards mostly gone, but the wide wooden rain shutters had been left propped up by some long-ago visitor, and sea and sky opened out calm and blue below us. Bits of fishing boats were breaking the smooth stretch now where once there would have been spouting whales. And suddenly, with banners flying, signal-fires lit, and drums pounding, the whaling fleet would be racing across those waters, each group in perfect formation, a bow bent and aiming for the heart of the whale pod. I realized that the chase scenes in the scrolls had all been drawn from the perspective of the lookout.

Mrs. Yoshikawa had lunch waiting for us when we returned: broiled fish, fresh tomatoes, and seasoned rice. I asked her what accounted for the unusual flavor of the rice. "Ogawa people liked their rice mixed with clams and a bit of whale blubber," Mrs. Yoshikawa replied. "Other people," she said "can't stand the smell of whale meat cooking. We can't live without it. Whale costs so much nowadays, we can hardly afford to buy it; still because all of our mothers and fathers and all of us, our children, too, have always smelled whale cooking, we have to have it in our meals and will go as far as Nagasaki to get it." The Yoshikawa family, like many Japanese people now and as far back as the sixteenth century, find whale meat especially delectable. Japanese diagrams for cutting the whale, as both the Ogawa and the Goto scrolls make clear, indicate not only how all parts of the whale were to be used, but how the meat was to be cut for good eating. Most relished among the Japanese is the fatty tail meat which is cut in thin slices and eaten raw with grated radish and ginger or with *miso,* a fermented bean paste.[9] Red meat—the color, it is said of scarlet peonies—taken from the whale's subaxial muscles, tastes best when sautéed with butter. Meat from the ventral grooves, which holds its shape even after boiling, is stewed or pan-fried, with a variety of vegetables in a variety of sauces. Yamada testifies that "only the liver is never eaten . . . though it is turned to private use by the flensers," and Engelbert Kaempfer writing *The History of Japan* at the end of the seventeenth century adds that "all the inward parts are eat, pickled, boiled, roasted, or fried. The fat, or blubber, is boiled into train-oil, and even the sediments of the second boiling are eat. The bones, such as are of a cartilaginous substance, are boiled when fresh, and eat or scraped, cleaned and dried for the use of the kitchen."[10] From the time the first book on cetological cuisine, *The Flavor of Whale Meat,* was published in 1732, whale skin, fried crisp, kidney, intestines, heart, bone marrow, and tongue have been treated as delicacies, and recipes and cooking hints continue to be published so that the special flavor, color, and texture of each part of the whale can be most thoroughly enjoyed. Proverbs claim that eating whale keeps old bad luck away, and that if one wants many descendants, one should eat sardines at New Year's, but if one wants great good fortune, one should eat whale.[11]

We went on to talk about the 90-year-old woman who lived with the Norwegian who'd come to the island to teach the use of the harpoon-guns, and then we talked about the use of whale-oil in keeping locusts out of the rice-fields. Off to the north, Ogawa Island does have some terraced land for rice, and whales' ground bones went into the soil for fertilizer and their boiled fat was burned to keep the fields free of insects. A good job it did, too, for Mrs. Yoshikawa remembered hearing that the fumes floated black and heavy over the fields even after the oil had stopped burning. Thus Japanese whaling communities, interested in using the whales in their entirety, ate them or plowed them back into the land and sustained life.

Mrs. Yoshikawa told me, too, that the old people had also made soap and lantern oil from whale blubber and a variety of medicines from different organs; predictably, the penis was often dried, pulverized, and swallowed by aging whalers to re-capture their virility. Tendons became ropes and cords, sinews samisen strings, and heart membranes drum-heads. Baleen became the ribs for folding fans, toothpicks, lantern handles, and children's swords. Mrs. Yoshikawa set before me a box which she'd taken from the cupboard. Here she kept, among spools of thread, loose family photographs, and a pocket diary, some commemorative stamps with a papier-mâché toy whale printed on them and a small wooden whale on wheels. The papier-mâché toy is modeled on a ceremonial float resembling a life-size right whale which was donated to a Nagasaki shrine in 1776 by a guild of the city and which continues to be pulled through the city streets with much fanfare at spring festival time. The wooden toy was Mrs. Yoshikawa's, and then her son's. I admired it, for I'd seen such toys in Taiji and in Kochi. The Kochi toy, on display in the city's feudal castle, dated from the eighteenth century. These small terrestrial whales are surprisingly like their aquatic prototypes: no Walt Disney eyes and "Have-A-Nice-Day" smiles, but crooked-jawed and intelligent-browed. Flukes held wide and tail held high, the toy whale was meant to keep the child company when his father was off catching real whales.

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[9] Discussions of the importance of whale meat in the Japanese diet and of the delight the Japanese have in preparing it and eating it occur in Nakahara, pp. 70-100; Shimonaka Kunihiko's *Kujira ni Idomu Machi: Kumano no Taiji* ("The Town Challenged by the Whale: Taiji of Kumano") (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1965), pp. 92-94; and in an essay by Omura Hideio, "Nippon Kujira Shiwa" ("Stories and the History of Japanese Whaling") published in the *Shimpyo Monthly Magazine* (November, 1973), pp. 110-116.

[10] Englebert Kaempfer, *The History of Japan,* in Vol. VII of John Pinkerton's *A General Collection of the Most Interesting Voyages* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808-1814), p. 706.

[11] Nakahara, pp. 199-203.

The Goto archipelago begins 100 kilometers south of Nagasaki and stretches 40 kilometers further south from Tomie to Arikawa. Formed of black volcanic rock, rimmed with shores of hard white sand, nearly tropical in the lush green of their vegetation, these small islands are beautiful. The gashes that now characterize most Japanese mountains, the pall of smoke that hangs over most Japanese cities, the rust that taints the waters, have not touched Goto; yet throughout the archipelago the old people are saying there are no young people left—they've gone to the cities; there's nothing for them to do here. The scenes in which the energies of several hundred people are focused on a single, multi-faceted enterprise belong now only to the Goto whaling scroll. Even Katamachi Kazuo, self-appointed island historian in Tomie said to me wistfully, "My daughters, too. One is in Nagasaki and one in Nagoya." I had found Katamachi-san working as the taxi-dispatcher out of a ramshackle wooden garage; delighted because my questions gave him a chance to leave the makeshift office, he hired a cab on the spot and had the two of us driven around to see his island's whaling relics. But relics are all that remain in the Goto islands of a vision of the whale and of the life that vision inspired.

I didn't know that when I set out from Nagasaki for Arikawa at the tip of the Goto archipelago. Arikawa, I was told, had been the most prosperous of Goto's whaling communities. In the town cultural center, where I went on arrival, I found an assortment of items laid out on a fly-specked sheet: the bones of the hands of an unborn whale, a sperm whale's tooth, a toy whale being towed by two boats, spears, lances, the armor and short coat worn by Eguchi Jiemon, the leader of the whaling clan in the sixteenth century. There was also a whaling boat, one-third the size of an original boat, for use in annual New Year's celebrations. The room which holds this collection of ill-assorted goods, fragments of an earlier culture, remains closed most of the year. I asked the curator for the written history of Arikawa in an attempt to catch a glimpse of the whaling community's former integrity. Bones dating from the fourth and fifth centuries suggest that beached whales were a food supply for the islanders, but not until 1598 did Eguchi establish a whaling operation here. As agricultural products declined, whaling came to flourish, and at its peak in the early nineteenth century the industry supported 40 boats. These facts, in spite of their chronological connection, seemed as fragmentary as the items on the table; then I read that according to written memory in Arikawa, as the whale dies, it groans and gargles deep in its throat, a sound which leads the whalers to pray three times, "May its soul rest in peace," and to give thanks to the Lord Buddha.[12] I read on. Arikawa whalers brought their catch home with triumph, of course, but certain cetological facts caused them to see themselves in the whale's position. Whales, they knew, especially the humpbacks, dote on their children. When a baby whale is netted, the parent swims round and round and tries to escape only when the young whale is dead; a parent whale, captured, goes berserk, attempts to rip through the net and to sink boats; a mother whale puts her fluke on her baby lest it become injured.[13] According to their historical record, Arikawa whalers had observed that the mother whale expresses toward that baby what human beings express toward their children and what perhaps the whalers themselves felt, at least in part, toward the whales: *aware,* that complex Japanese word meaning tenderness and pity.

From my window at the inn I saw testimony that Arikawa had felt the deaths of the slain whales to be most piteous. A white arch, made from a whale's rib bones, reached skyward. At dusk, I walked across the street to these soaring bones, passed under them and across a small bridge whose balustrades were pelvis bones, up steps and under two more sets of rib bones. That journey upward, passing beneath whale bones, inside the whale's very skeleton, gave me something of Jonah's feeling. A large *sake* bottle had been placed on the altar at the head of the shrine. As Buddhists, the people of Arikawa regretted taking the lives of the whales—fish, they thought, but bleeding so profusely, crying out so plaintively, and carrying on so like themselves over their young that to compensate and to show their compassion and gratitude to the whales they erected this shrine in the early seventeenth century, as the people of Kayoi had created their memorials.

That night from my window I watched a distant light glow on and off, and discovered the next morning that it was a small lighthouse set on the shore's highest bluff where once the whaling lookout had stood. A young boy, browned by the island's constant sun, followed me along the path up the bluff, keeping a space between us. At the lighthouse, I called to him and offered a piece of chewing gum. He put it in his pocket. I looked out at the sea; irregular waves made queer calligraphic marks on its surface. The boy watched me, a stranger in his community. He followed behind me, fewer paces now, as I went down the other side of the bluff. All along this path were memorials set up nearly 300 years ago for the souls of the dead whales; over 1000 had been killed in three years during Eguchi's administration of whaling in Arikawa, and his gratitude was carved on a large tablet. A haiku, written in 1762 in *The Luck of the Sea,* reads:

As each year comes around,
Memorial tablets for whales—
How laudable this is![14]

The boy was walking just behind me now, and I could ask him questions. His school? His summer vacation? His family? He took this path sometimes as a roundabout way to get to the swimming beach and passed these memorials every time, but he couldn't say they interested him. I learned that his father was a whaler out of Kinkazan, the port far north of Tokyo which sends ships out to the Antarctic and the Arctic whaling grounds. I sensed, however, that the boy was more interested in the things of this world, present here and now. He drank the Coke I'd bought for him and showed me to the bus I would take to Maruo, a community of less than 100 people, but once Arikawa's rival in whaling.

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[12] This information comes from Chapter X, "Arikawa-cho Hogeishi" ("The History of Whaling in Arikawa") in *Arikawa Hogeigyo no Hattsu* ("The Development of the Whaling Industry in Arikawa"), pp. 286-289.

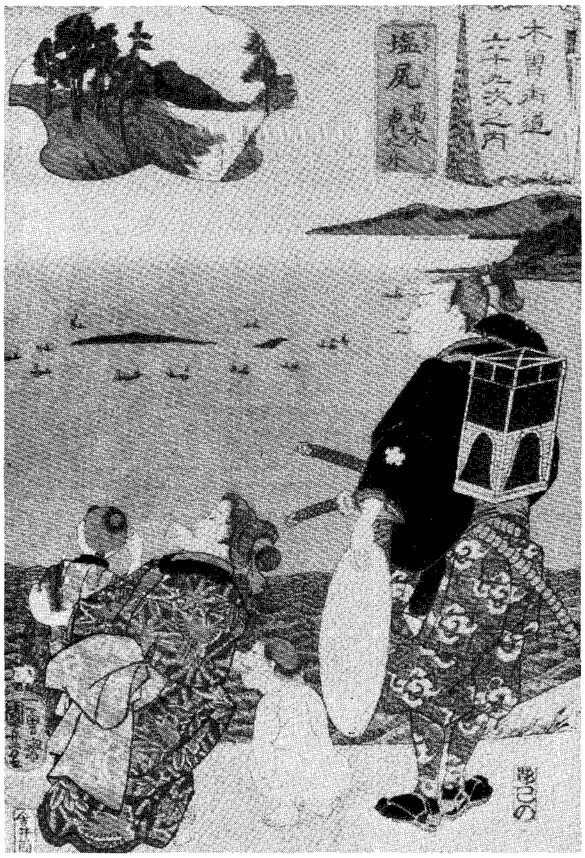
[13] Hawley translates from *Geiki* ("A Relation of the Whale"), 1764-71, a description of the manner in which the calf is used to decoy the mother whale; he observes that "the Japanese whalers of the time owned it their greatest satisfaction to chance upon a cow with her calf: for the dam being unwilling to effect her escape alone, they found it easy to dispatch them together," p. 329.

[14] Translated in Hawley, p. 154.

The people I met first in Maruo didn't know what I was talking about. Whales? Oh, that was over in Arikawa. Memorial stones? No such here. But I insisted, going from one house to another, one group of road workers to another. The women workers in bulky pantaloons, their faces hidden by sun-bonnets, wouldn't look at me; a young man kicked a pebble toward me with his split-toed black rubber boot. It was hard to keep my mind on whales. An older man joined the group farthest down the road; yes, he knew about the stones, and reluctantly agreed to take me to the place. He cut our way up a slope through waist-high brambles with a machete, following a barely discernible path. We eventually came out on top of a hill from which one might once have been able to watch the sea, but which now was given over to a thicket of snarled greenery. The man pointed to a corrugated tin-roofed shed. Mosquitoes swarmed and whirred. Inside the shed were five small stones set on pedestals. No one came here anymore, the man said, except after New Year's when the priest arrived from a town nearby to give thanks for all the fish taken in the year. Once, once, I thought, there had been whales in the lives of Maruo folk. On the way back to Arikawa, walking this time, I passed one of the island's beautiful beaches, laid out so smooth and white between the tall, irregular black guardian rocks. In the calm blue water, four high-prowed boats made of raw pine planks were racing, filled with young boys; one boy in each boat steered with the great oar at the back, another beat rhythms on a large square soy-sauce can, and the rest paddled like crazy. There was much laughing and cheering, and I learned later they were practicing for All-Souls' festivities. I wondered if they knew how their great-great-grandfathers had raced with just such enthusiasm out to meet the whale.

I took a bus, a taxi, a ferry, another bus and another taxi to reach Katamachi-san the next day in Tomie back at the other end of the archipelago. The young taxi-driver who had been asked to drive us helped at each of the places Katamachi-san directed us to. Born and raised in Tomie, he'd never seen these whaling relics and was interested. Machetes had to be borrowed here, too, to cut back the low brush growing over the tomb of a late nineteenth-century harpooner on a headland jutting out into the Pacific, and the collapsed siding of a barn had to be shoved aside before we could begin to locate a set of monuments to certain slain whales' souls. The pedestals were intact, but the monuments were gone! Who had taken them? Katamachi-san hadn't seen them since he'd been a boy. He could only speculate that someone was now using them to build a better wall. We drove back through town to see a small shrine honoring the Taiji-Goto connection and then out to a village, in the center of which was a well, made from huge blocks of black lava and boarded over. Here, said Katamachi-san, the whale meat was washed, and he'd heard that sometime ago, before the well was declared a community nuisance, old whale bones occasionally would float up to the surface. There was one more place he thought to take me, but the taxi-fare would be expensive, and neither he nor the driver had been there. He didn't know what we'd find, but as the islands' historian, he was eager to see.

We drove up as close to the beach as we could, but then Katamachi-san and I had to leave the driver with his cab to wait by a cattle feed-lot. In spite of winds from the sea, the area stank, and the stench increased even as we walked away from the cattle. The beach ahead of us had become the island's dump. It was a-litter with garbage and old clothes, plastic bottles and styrofoam chunks. Tidal pools were locked in by the junk; shoes and lemons rotted with mussels and seaweed, and the styrofoam rocked back and forth in the sluggish waters. Except for some tatami mats bulging with sea-water and decay, this devasted beach might have edged any land mass in the world. Katamachi-san and I tried to step from one solid surface to another to reach the other end of the beach. Overhead, the sky arched wide, and away from the beach, the sea shimmered silently. At first we didn't see the monuments; they crouched in a rough overhang made by the roots of a single pine. It proved impossible to read the entire inscriptions on them, so worn were they by sea winds and time, but Katamachi-san identified the monument which had been set up to the memory of Monkuro, guessing that another one was a grave and that the other three were to unknown gods. I noticed that these monuments had stirred someone to reverence; care had been taken to find the Pream jar, place two sprigs of pine in it, and set it before Monkuro's marker.


木曽街道
六十九次之内
塩尻

In the cab, Katamachi-san had given me the outlines of Monkuro's story. A fisherman troubled by his village's lack of food, Monkuro decided to approach the demon reputed to live in the forested mountains behind the village. After long, terrifying nights in obeisance before the demon's shrine, he was rewarded by a meeting with the monster, who proposed that he sacrifice his son for a large fish for the village. Returning to the village and in despair, he slept and dreamed that a great white whale of 33 fathoms would appear in the open sea before the village. The whale pleaded for safe passage through the water. The next morning, Monkuro woke to the hue and cry that a whale had been sighted off shore. Running to the beach himself, he discovered that it was as large and as white as it had appeared in his dream. The young men of the village, including his son, were already preparing their boats for the confrontation, and Monkuro's protestations were regarded by the hungry villagers as mad ravings. The father followed the son out to sea, and tradition claims that after the whale destroyed the son, Monkuro destroyed the whale. He had guaranteed the accuracy of his harpoon's thrust as well as his own death by lashing himself to the harpoon. The bodies of the three floated onto the beach days later, one after the other: son, father, whale. They were given a common burial on the beach by the weeping village women who, it is said, for years afterwards performed purification rites, waving strips of white paper and young bamboo branches over the grave. But still their weeping did not abate.[15]

Monkuro's story, as much as Hayakawa-san's report of the whale's tears, set me thinking of the particular nature of the traditional Japanese attitude toward the whale. At the end of the Monkuro legend, the white whale was slain and the community mourned both men and animal, for both were victim and victimizer. Though the demonic qualities of the whale had to be exorcised, the villagers' response to the whale was finally eulogistic; their grief was for the loss of life and their yearning was for life's renewal.

Uno Koichiro won the Akutagawa Prize in 1962 for his short story, "The Whale God," a tale set in Nagasaki and based perhaps in part on Melville's and Monkuro's story.[16] Here, however, the son seeks revenge for his father's death, and the whale is, like Ahab's Moby Dick, evil incarnate, the embodiment of the demonic. I came home from Japan with a folder of pamphlets and photographs, a box of cetological books written in Japanese, and a dozen toy whales, wooden, papier-mâché, and clay. As Ahab's whale was not Melville's, so I realized the Japanese vision of the whale was neither Monkuro's nor Uno's. If the whale could be demonic, it could also be divine; if it could be weighed and measured, it could also be mysterious. In the earliest records of Japanese life—the *Kojiki* (712), the *Fudoki* (c. 720), the *Manyoshu* (c. 760)—the whale is neither demonic nor divine; it is simply mentioned in relation to its size and to certain place names and in association with various bodies of water.[17]

The Ainu people of Hokkaido certainly considered the whale to be associated with divinity.[18] Having killed a whale, they welcomed its soul into their homes with prayers, and with prayers they also sent its skull back to the sea so that it might rejoin its mother and father, sisters and brothers, and come again to their homes. At the head of the Ainu family of sea-deities is "the god upon the waves of the sea who receives fetishes," who, whenever he allows himself to be seen, appears in the form of a killer-whale. An obscure 1929 print shows a whale stretched out upon an elegant dais, its eyes peacefully closed.[19] Surrounding it are the myriad creatures of the sea—a crab, shrimp, tortoise, ray, eel, mackerel, octopus, flounder, squid, conch—their mouths all agape with sorrow. A humorous parody, perhaps, but the print nevertheless has re-created the Death of Buddha, as important a subject for sacred Buddhistic art as the cruxificion is for Christian art, with the Buddha figure invariably larger than the ordinary human and always surrounded by his weeping disciples. The sea rolls quietly in the background of the print, and clouds, the conventional iconographic sign in Japanese art signifying the ephemeral nature of things, border the top of the print.

In another story, a whale, hearing of the enormous statue of Buddha in Kamakura which measures 50 feet in height and 97 feet in circumference, was incredulous that anything could be larger than itself. Determined to see for itself, the whale donned magic boots and proceeded to Kamakura. When it proved impossible for the whale, because of its size, to enter the temple housing the Buddha, the statue came down from its pedestal and agreed, at the whale's request, to being measured. Using his rosary, the temple priest then ascertained that the whale was indeed the larger—by two inches, and thus satisfied that not even the deity could transcend it in size, the whale retraced its steps back to the sea.[20]

The stories of beneficent whales outnumber the stories of possibly malign whales. In about 1135, so one tale goes, a priest named Yoda Emon, who had been exiled to Oshima Island off the coast of the Izu peninsula for negligence in tending his shrine, took to fishing as a means of passing his days and feeding his neighbors.[21] One day his fishing was interrupted by a terrible storm, and he was blown far out to sea. Repentant for his sin of catching fish, he prayed, but to no avail; his boat was shattered, and he was left to cling to a single oar. Miraculously, however, he suddenly found himself supported by a whale who brought him steadily and serenely the following day to a friendly fishing boat. Grateful Yoda subsequently submitted to the discipline of his exile, gave up fishing, and many years later, when he had expiated his sins, he became governor of the Oshima Island group and, with the Emperor's permission, issued orders forbidding the killing of whales during his lifetime.

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[15] Monkuro's story is also set down in Gunkei Shinichi's *Goto Monogatari* ("The Tale of Goto") (Tokyo: Toshokan-kokai, 1974), pp. 259-270.

[16] Uno Koichiro, *Kujira-Gami* ("The Whale God"), (Tokyo: Bungei-shunjusha, 1962).

[17] More extensive discussion of the appearance of whales in these classical texts occurs in Shimonaka, pp. 169-172; "Nippon Kujira Shiwa," pp. 106-107; *Kumano Taiji Ura Hogeishi,* pp. 162-164.

[18] Ainu whaling and the Ainu attitude toward the whale is discussed in *Kumano Taiji Ura Hogeishi,* pp. 561-571; John Batchelot, *Ainus,* Vol. 1 of *Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Scribner's, 1908), p. 244; Sarashina Genzo, *Reikishi to Minzoku Ainu* ("The History and the Folk-Ways of the Ainus") (Tokyo: Shakai-shisosha, 1969), pp. 64-67; Robert F. Heizer, "Aconite Poison Whaling in Asia and America: An Aleutian Transfer to the New World," Anthropological Papers, No. 24 (Smithsonian Institute, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 133), pp. 415-468, *passim.* In most regards, the complex whaling rites and techniques of the Ainus have little in common with the people of the Japanese islands to the south of them and much in common with those of people to the north, the Kamchadal, the Aleut, and the Koniag peoples.

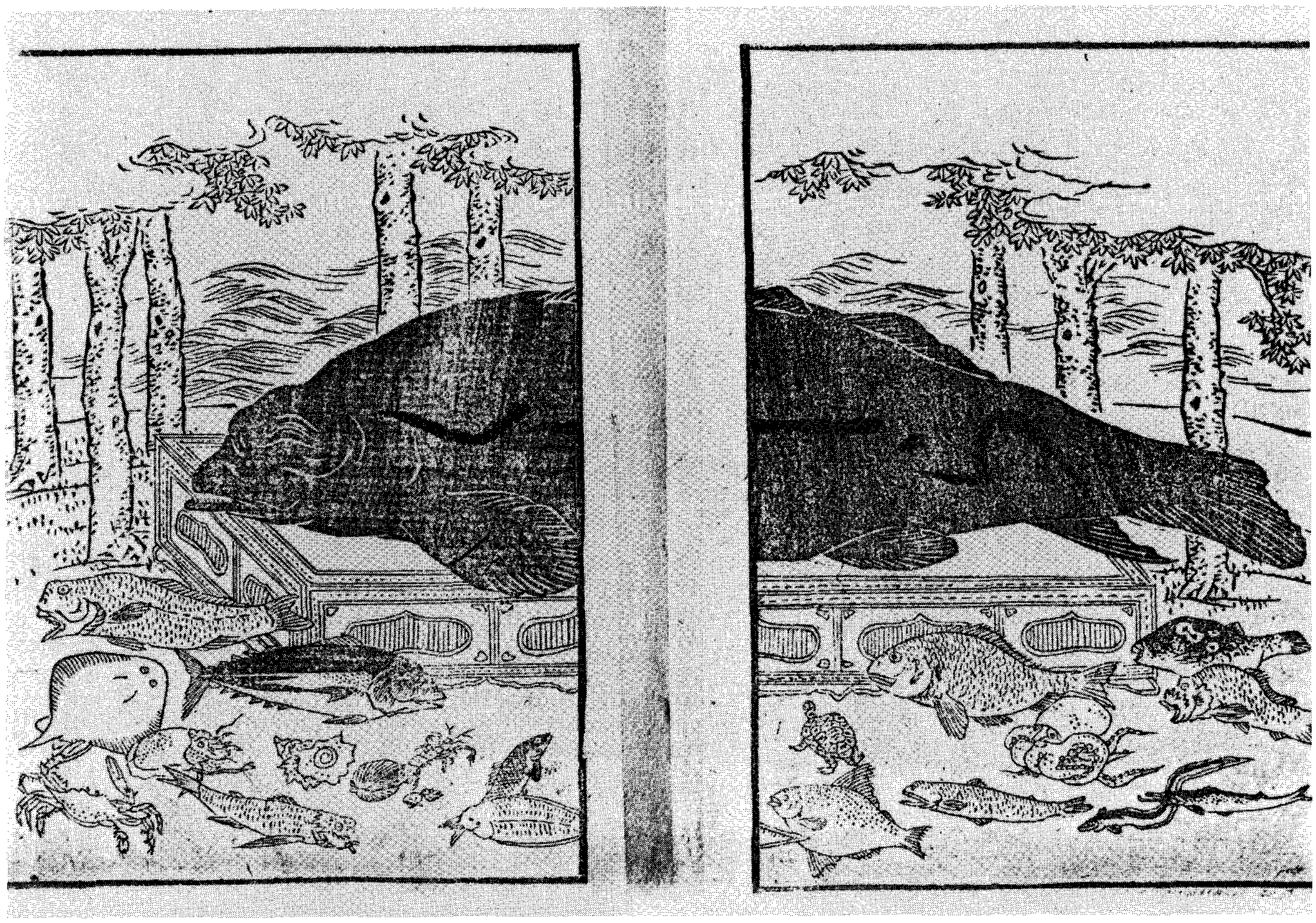
[19] This print is in a privately printed book by a man who on retirement took the monk's name Toen; it is in my possession.

[20] See F. Hadland Davis, *Myths & Legends of Japan* (London: George G. Harrap & Company, 1917), pp. 82-86.

[21] Smith, pp. 196-200.

A tale associated with a shrine in the small coastal town of Misaki in Miyagi prefecture credits a white whale with rescuing a ship-load of men.[22] In April of 1800, a certain merchant named Oshugaya Yasushiro was transporting a ship of rice as the annual payment to the daimyo in Sendai with about 16 men. Again a storm came up, destroying the ship's mast and sails and necessitating that all the rice be dumped overboard. At the height of the storm's fury, however, the sailors heard a voice calling out, telling them to abandon their large ship and to take refuge in a small boat, an act which none of them would have dared to think possible. Seeing a number of whales swimming around them, amongst which was an enormous white whale, the men realized that the voice was that of the white whale, of "a messenger from Misaki's gracious deity." When the men had settled themselves in the small boat, the whales, holding it up with their flukes, gently pushed it to calmer waters and the shore. This miraculous rescue is recorded in the *Misaki History of Light and Dark Divine Deeds*, and the whales are commemorated by a sacred cairn of stones in the town temple called "The Place of Whales."

Propped up around my desk are four wood-block prints of whales drawn by the artist Kuniyoshi Utagawa in the 1840s at just the time when Japanese whaling was in its heyday.[23] Kuniyoshi must have become whale-haunted, for these pictures taken together reflect his various struggles to represent the whale as it was viewed in traditional Japanese culture. The first of these Kuniyoshi prints comes from his Kisokaido Road series which shows events or legends associated with particular stops on the road; it sets quite an ordinary family from the inland town of Shiojiri on a bluff overlooking the sea. The father has his eyes shaded and the mother and two children are pointing. Their attention is riveted upon a large whale, still spouting, but encircled by the boats of harpooners and netters. My attention, too, is drawn by theirs into the picture and becomes focused on the whale; a solid black mass, just partially visible above the water, it can be only an enigma, an object of amazement to its beholders. A second print, a triptych, represents the slaughter of whales at a coastal whaling factory in the Taiji or the Nagasaki area. Five whales have been hauled into the shore, one of which is being dismembered, and two more are being pursued by boats among the outlying islands. It



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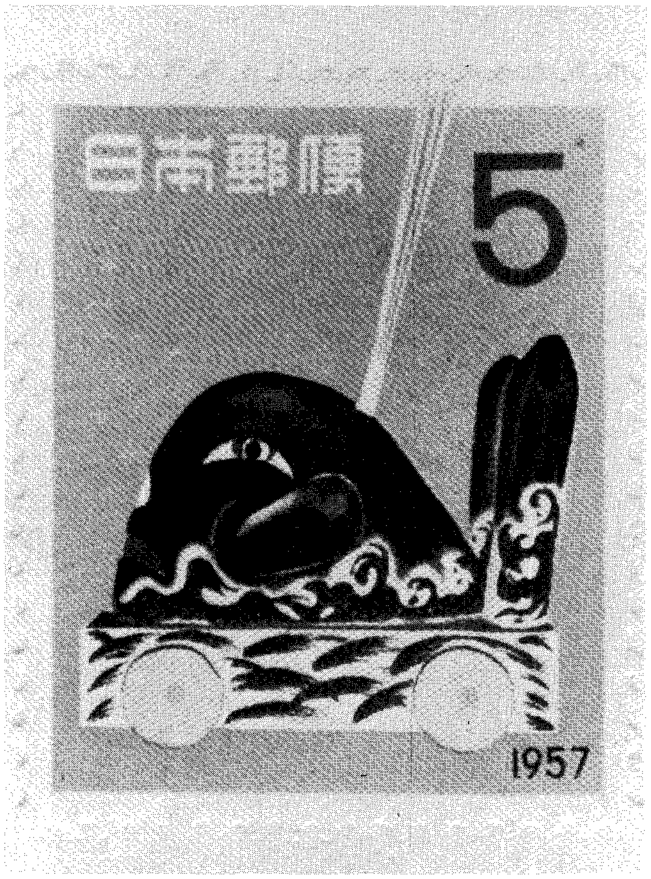
[22] Suehiro Yoshio, *Sakana to Densetsu* ("Fish and Tradition") (Tokyo: Shichosha, 1964), pp. 185-188.

[23] Kuniyoshi's print of the Shiojiri stop on the Kisokaido Road is in my possession. "Cutting in at Taiji and Nagasaki" can be seen in *Audubon* (January, 1975), pp. 80-81; "Crowd Viewing a Captured Whale" in the *Raymond A. Bidwell Collection of Prints of Kuniyoshi Utagawa* (Springfield, Mass.: Museum of Fine Arts, 1968), p. 84; "Miyamoto Musashi Subduing the Whale," in Juzo Suzuki's and Isaburo Oka's *The Decadents*, trans. John Bester (Tokyo: Kodansha International, Ltd., 1969), pp. 68-69. All of these prints may be seen in the Kendall Whaling Museum; Sharon, Massachusetts.



might be said that Kuniyoshi here seems to be compressing features of a whaling manual: the flat, graphic, illustrations of different kinds of whales—grey, right, and humpback—and the different stages involved in the whaling industry. The men are definitely animated, straining to push the winch around, laboring under the weight of their loads of blubber, flamboyantly wielding their flensing lances, but the whales, in contrast, appear almost single-dimensional, with only their eyes uncannily alive; rolled upward, they express weariness with this endless pain, this excessive killing. The eye of the great right whale which figures in the center print is ringed by wrinkles and stares out at me with perpetual sadness as his body is cut out into a stage for further butchery, as his body is whittled down before his very eye.

In another triptych Kuniyoshi has recorded the spectacle of a whale in Edo Bay. It is partially surrounded by party boats from the city; as the men with their geishas drink and sing and point and shout, the whale remains a calm presence. The density of the black ink applied to the bulk of the creature which stretches across the three prints suggests its imperviousness, its tranquility in the presence of the frivolity of the partying spectators with their flapping kimonos, sun-shades, and silly grins. From the left-hand print, the whale's eye, accentuated by quivering horizontal white lines, looks back on these beings with resignation and pity. Undoubtedly dead to have been brought into Edo Bay, the whale is nevertheless accompanied by neither net nor carrier boat; it provides its own mysterious buoyancy. Comparable to the creature's buoyant serenity is Mt. Fuji, which rises in the background of the right-hand print, the clarity of its form being quite like that of the whale's. The mountain and the whale seem elemental in contrast to the transient "Floating World" of human beings literally represented by the partying spectator boats.

The Kuniyoshi print which is set directly up in front of me is entitled, "Miyamoto Musashi Subduing the Whale." Here the whale has been magnificiently conceived; completely filling three panels, it dominates the print. A female right whale, it is beautifully colored—no dress kimono could be more exquisite; Kuniyoshi has made the crustacea which characteristically cling to the whale's body appear as a brocaded pattern of small white spots on black; her underbelly and lower sides are white, her curved mouth a clear line of red. In this print as in the Taiji-Nagasaki triptych, it seems as if Kuniyoshi had never actually seen a whale swimming, for this wonderful creature is poised against the upward sweep of a blue wave, her belly, both teats, and both flukes entirely visible; the effect, however, of Kuniyoshi's inaccurate representation of the swimming whale, of his having seen only dead whales or pictures of whales, is that the whale, for all her enormity, seems to be magically, almost divinely floating. Unlike the Edo Bay whale, this whale has transcended the water altogether. Atop the whale's back in the middle print stands Musashi, mighty swordsman and adventurer of the early feudal period, his sword raised, his eyes fiercely slanted, one foot back, toe down, the other forward, heel down, toe up, taking, according to art critic Mizuo Hiroshi, a conventional Kabuki pose.[24] Mizuo further notes that the picture might seem to represent a life-and-death struggle until one notices the whale's meek and gentle eye. Musashi's pose seems to imply then, in Mizuo's opinion, that the whale and the man are engaged in a thrilling sport, but when we look at that lovely eye, Musashi's antics on the back of this marvelous creature appear absurd.

Kuniyoshi seems like all the human actors and observers in his pictures, unfeeling and frenetic, fascinated and perhaps finally frustrated by his own attempt to paint the leviathan at the last. Musashi, after all, can only see the single spot toward which he directs his sword; he can conceive neither the lovely eye in the left panel nor the cloud-tipped tail in the right panel. And I realize that I, too, am perhaps like this Kuniyoshi as I look at the assorted relics, notes, and memories I have brought back about the whale from Japan. I think back over these various perceptions of the whale in pre-industrial Japan, perceptions of the whale before the development of the harpoon-gun, the pelagic fleet, and the factory ship; before the Japanese whaler learned to shoot the whale from afar, and thus could no longer see its tears; before he did his whaling away from his community and the land, and thus could no longer remember that his killing and cutting and canning might be related to the dimensions of affection and sympathy and mortality in his own life. I realize, perhaps as Kuniyoshi did, that this very variety of attitudes once taken toward the whale in Japan reflects the richness of a culture, envigorated by its complex and ceremonial relationship with the natural world. I am left pondering with an apothecary of Wakayama, writing in 1758 in *A Treatise of the Whale,* the earliest printed monograph on cetacea in Japan: "But the universe is of a vast immensity, and the differing sorts of things contained therein are beyond compute. . . . [But] To my mind it is perhaps the whale alone that satisfies that condition."[25]

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[24] Mizuo Hiroshi, "The Print of Miyamoto Musashi Subduing the Whale," *Sekai Dobutsu Hyakku,* 60 (14 May 1972), p. 31.

[25] Quoted in Hawley, p. 216.

JOHN BIGUENET

SCRIMSHAW

Something like a sigh, like the flutter of nuns
climbing a stone staircase or wings
flapping against velvet curtains,
something spoken beyond the echoes
of an ear's arched corridors,
the musculature of air,
falling in the trembling octaves of the felt,
something that silenced us so abruptly
we turned and looked at one another.
What had gone forth from us as words
returned as stillness, ripples of a solitude
not among the chemicals of our memories.
Had something died? It was seconds, centuries
before our murmuring began again.

As if the universe had flickered, as if
the great falls of Time spilling the deafening present
into the bottomless pool of the past
had ceased—even the electrons of the Himalayas
paused in their circuits, and those huge rocks fell
from existence, forgotten angels of an unconscious Motion,
they were disappearing they were being born
they had never been they were suffering
the first death, and we with them—
and immediately (how else to describe an eternity)
began again. That first instant,
discontiguous with the instant before,
was horribly uncomfortable. But with the first few words,
we reinvented our lives.

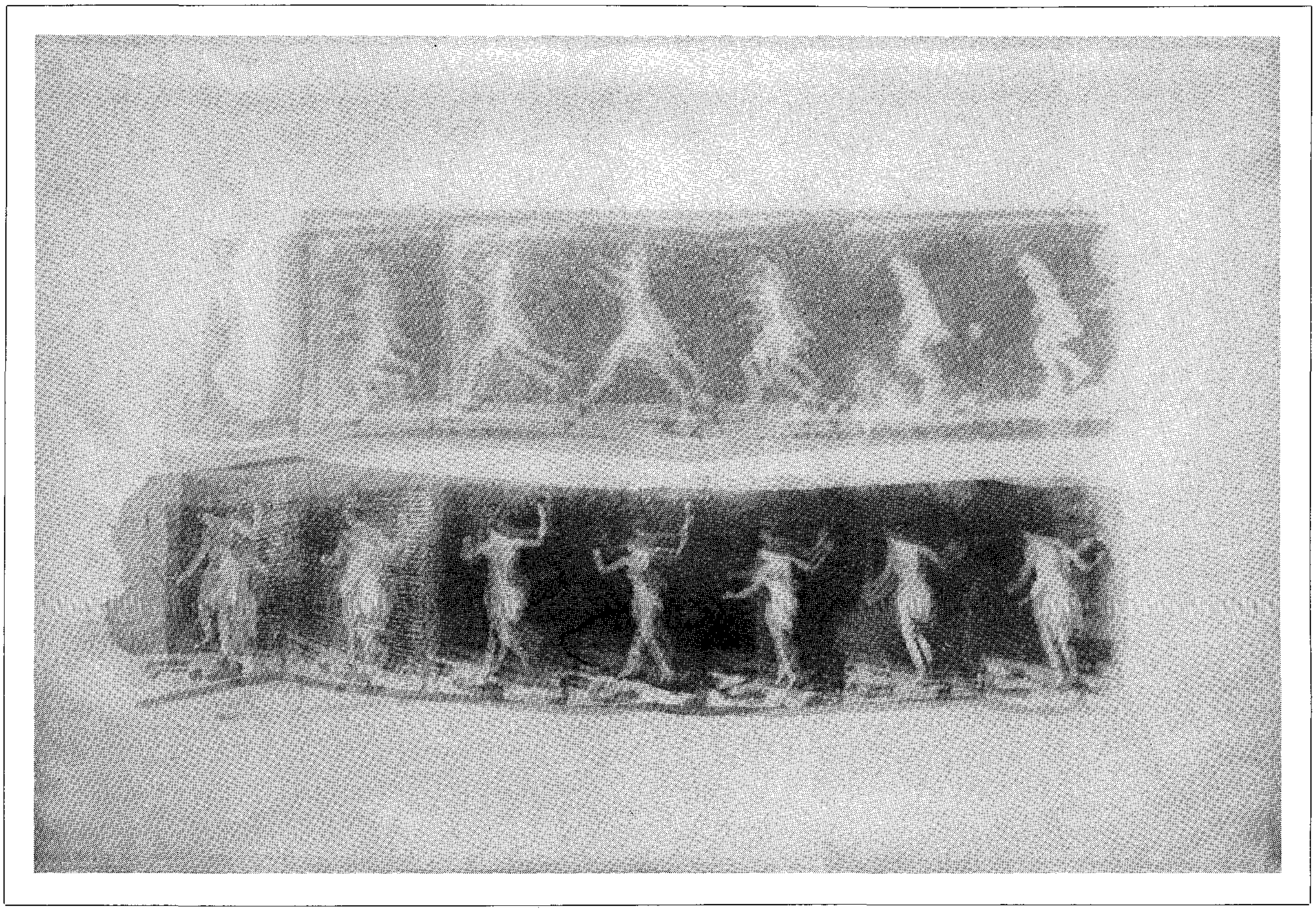
This new age was beyond us. All things
seemed altered, seemed to waver with the new heat
that infused them. As if we inhabited
buildings whose narrow foundations had powdered
and blown into the streets under their mountainous weight.
In the hesitation before collapse,

while millions of disrupted stones
clung to their idea of the building they had been,
the skyscraper hung in the air, teetering
above the habit of its crushed foundation.
The swirling dust glazed our clay eyes.
We waited beneath a canopy of winter light
for our towers to decline,
to crumble into themselves like stars.
We savored the luxury of unequaled spectacle
accorded the victims of unimaginable disaster.
We were being honored in the same fashion
as a man drawn across the membrane of a black hole
or a woman devoured by a minotaur.
But by dark it became clear that we might as well
go inside, for the hesitation persisted
and the snow was scalding our faces.
There was memory in the mortar;
things were holding on. In our own way,
we were proud of our floating cities.
But no one ever mentioned the twelve inches of light
emptying into the room at the base of its walls.

And yet, most do not notice. Or else
they have no word for it, and so say nothing.
I have tried to open their eyes,
but they are impatient with my metaphors.
Still, even in this new tapestry, a raveling.
A wisp of thread and the full weight bearing down
on the flaw. In the imperceptible collapse of silk,
years stagger. Finally the conclusion of simple forces:
a wound running across the fabric
like the wave splayed by a fin,
making a sound something like a sigh,
something like a man scratching his story in bone
in the interior of this whale.

STEVEN ALLABACK

DELIA'S RUN



Could I run with you?" asked Delia. "I mean, could I jog while you run?"

"Really?"

"Yep. I've been practicing."

"Practicing?"

"Isn't that the word?"

"You mean you've been *training?*"

"Training," said Delia. "That's the word, I remember now. Anyway, I've been doing it."

"Really? I can't believe it."

"Yep. I have. All by myself."

"Well, then, let's go."

He was as pleased as she had seen him in years. As they made their way through the neighborhood and down the winding path to the beach, she saw that he was trying not to be overly pleased, trying to frame exactly the right question. He obviously wanted to avoid making it an issue between them again.

"So you been sneaking in workouts on me, huh? Where? At the junior high track?"

"Practically every afternoon," she laughed. "For months."

"I don't believe it."

"It's true, though."

"Well, I'll be damned."

They were jogging now, heading south, toward Rincon Point, and going a step or two more slowly than she was used to. She had found—on her own, after he had given up on her—that she enjoyed running, could do it well, indeed was made for it. She had always been slight—"My little willow," he used to call her—so there was hardly any weight to lose, just strength to gain, which had happened more quickly than she thought possible.

"Is this too fast?" asked Ned.

"This is great," she said. "Perfect." If she was already a touch breathless, it was from excitement and anxiety, not the pace. "Don't let me hold you back, Ned," she said, nearly giggling over her own private joke. She felt wickedly sure of herself.

"No problem."

"What a glorious day it is."

"Beautiful," he said. "Just sensational."

The tide was out, the air so clear she could see the smoke stacks at the power plant fifteen miles down the coast. A warm autumn wind bathed them in a pungent, exhilarating sea fragrance. She could understand why these daily runs had always mattered to him. "I should have started doing this years ago," she said, raising her arms skyward.

"You certainly should have," he said quietly.

But she knew it just popped out. She laughed and said nothing. He couldn't help it.

"Sure this isn't too fast?" he asked.

"It's fine, just right. I love it."

"I knew you would, once you did it."

He looked around now himself, as if for the first time in a long time, his head turning this way and that like a giant, keen-eyed shore bird, proud of his domain. He used to give her short, aphoristic speeches about the benefits of running—"an honest-to-God way of prolonging and energizing life," he would say, "a calculable daily achievement," "a species of discipline"—but they were actually forms of criticism, or at least she took them as such, which she now knew was a mistake. Not that he didn't intend criticism, because he did—he was like that, from the beginning—but self-justification lurked in those little speeches too, and confessions: his need to escape, his fear of aging, other fears. And she had almost yielded, had almost allowed herself to be broken like a horse and begin running at his command.

"You're looking good," he said, appraising her legs as he would a twenty-year-old's, nodding shrewdly to himself. Sometimes he was like any other man.

"I feel good." Had he finally noticed that her legs were firmer, more muscular? They were. They had been for months. But she was so thin in the first place that her new legs probably didn't show; they just felt strong and springy, which gave her confidence in herself, pure and simple, though she hadn't advertised that fact either. A mystery, too, how it happened, how stronger legs gave her more than she got from friends, from books, even from the children. Or if not more then something different: confidence without alloy, pure confidence, in the abstract. Much of the time.

"Look there," said Ned. "Bastards."

They had just gone under the Standard Oil pier and then around the rocky point where in the spring sea lions came ashore at night. At first Delia thought Ned meant the men on the pier who had yelled something at them as they passed beneath, but he was pointing ahead, at something on the sand? at sea lions? No. At two sets of motorcycle tracks, half-circles imprinted on the damp sand as if fat, knobby-skinned snakes had been here only moments before. The tracks emerged from the foot of an abandoned dirt road which slanted down the bluff.

One of his pet peeves was motorcycles on the beach, especially on this remote stretch they were entering, his own private preserve. He kept looking ahead, running his eyes along the ribbon of sand stretching out before them, but she saw them first: two black figures about a half-mile away. There were so many things he disliked, so many grievances.

"There they are," he said. "The criminals."

"You don't know," said Delia. "We'll see."

"Creeps."

"Be nice."

He nodded, forced a smile at her, even reached over and patted her on the back. "You're right," he said. "I *will* be nice." Again, she noticed, he had reminded himself to stay cheerful and unruffled on this important day, her first run with him at his special place. Probably he thought she'd give up running and never come again if something went wrong. Something was wrong, but it had nothing to do with running, his or hers, and she'd never give it up, not now.

"It's a man and a woman," she said.

"You can tell?"

"Sure."

"You have better eyes than I do."

True, she did. Hadn't he known that before now? He seemed to be looking at her, talking to her, as though she were suddenly a different person, which she most certainly was not. She had seen him—and other men too—react like that before, but she still found it hard to accept: a new hairdo or a new dress made them see a new you, a reaction far out of proportion to the event. She laughed quietly to herself: she *was* new and different, and she wanted him to notice.

"They shouldn't be on the beach," he said.

"Maybe they're saying the same about us."

"Maybe," he said, blowing out air, trying to relax. "Maybe so."

But she could understand his annoyance. She too disliked the soul-searing rasp of dirt bikes on distant hillsides, the unearned cockiness of the riders as they perched on their machines, breaking their own trails with such ease. And Ned must have felt their indifference to runners like himself. He probably translated that indifference to contempt; he probably thought them utterly contemptuous of his labor. He thought they ridiculed him. And maybe they did. She had no way of knowing. Maybe not, though. She herself had received only encouragement, not ridicule, from people who had seen her running at the track, but that was at the track, where things were safer.

"They're just having fun," she said.

"Come on, Deal."

"You mean they're in misery?"

"It's no fun being pulled along by a motor."

"In your opinion."

"They know it too. Deep down."

"Oh."

"I'm telling you, they do."

She decided to say nothing. Perhaps her easy, noiseless breathing would be comment enough. He probably expected her to be dragging at this point, but instead she began to pick up the pace, strengthened by his small compliment about her eyesight. It didn't take much. Mere crumbs.

The motorcyclists were upon them now and as different from the threatening, low-rider type as she could imagine. A matched pair of bright yellow motorcycles, medium-sized, muffled as if under water, harmless, almost cute, possibly rented. It looked like fun. The two riders, the man and the woman, were about their own age and appeared just as fit—suntans, short hair, even running shorts and expensive running shoes without socks. They smiled delightedly, as if meeting another couple on this empty beach were an unexpected treat. They waved. Delia waved back.

"Stay right next to me," said Ned. He began to veer in front of them. They were trying to keep their motorcycles on the firm sand at water's edge, but Delia saw that Ned wanted to force them back up the inclined beach into the soft sand. Did he want them to get stuck?

"Give them room, Ned."

"Stay with me, Deal."

But she didn't. She allowed them space through which to proceed and as they passed the man gave Delia a friendly nod—"Keeping in shape, huh?"—and the woman said happily, "Our way is a lot less work."

"It sure is," said Delia, laughing brightly.

And then the motorcyclists were behind them.

"They weren't criminals," said Delia. "Were they?"

"Why'd you let them by so easily?"

"I feel *good,*" she said, looking out to sea, her head high, her back straight. She felt another surge of decisiveness, and she wondered if it would last.

"You knew"—Ned caught his breath—"you knew I wanted to force them into the soft stuff."

"Whatever for?"

"For the lesson, for God's sake. I don't care how nice you think they are. The beach is no place for motorcycles. You know that."

"It's not the end of the world. You're being silly, Ned."

He looked sharply at her, but then he sort of shrugged off his exasperation, if that's what it was—and not hate. She imagined that a blockage had formed within his chest, near his lungs. The same thing had happened often enough to her. She knew what it was like to run when you were angry. Sections of yourself seemed all at once to expand and mass together like a great clog of oatmeal.

"This is fun," said Delia.

"Yes."

She didn't say it to nettle him. She wanted him to know that they could be companions again, that she had learned to enjoy something she never thought she would. And even if he were nettled, it simply didn't matter that much, not here, not on this beautiful beach on this beautiful day, not when she felt like taking flight and skimming over the breaking waves with the gulls and the pelicans. She was prancing, not running. She had worked so hard.

"Aren't you getting tired yet?" he asked.

"Nope."

He lowered his arms and shook them, trying to loosen up. He looked to his right, toward the islands, every canyon and gully of which was visible on this sparkling clear day. Delia wondered if he ever imagined himself living on one of those empty islands, as she often did, taking quiet walks through oak groves or swimming in the clear water, cooking home-grown vegetables over a wood stove in an adobe house half hidden in the chaparral.

"I was afraid of that," said Ned.

"Of what?"

"Over there," said Ned. "Next to the bluff. Don't look."

"Don't look at what?"

Her eyes sought the spaces between the stacks of driftwood and the piles of dried kelp. She knew what she would see: a small group of naked people, which Ned found almost as bad as motorcyclists. Not, he would say, because they were naked but because they had a way of taking absolute possession of the beach. He had often returned from a run and criticized them—"They don't seem carefree and uninhibited to *me,*" he would say, or "How come they find frisbees so fascinating?" or "Naked ladies are so lumpy"—but Delia was fairly sure he would have enjoyed lying naked on the beach, even if he didn't know it himself. Who wouldn't?

As they drew near the naked people, Delia noticed one of the men standing apart from the others: darkly tan, sun-streaked hair, lithe as a dancer. She had seen him before in the market, but he belonged to no family she knew of, and she had guessed this blandly handsome man to live in the apartment district. He certainly knew how to pick the nice out-of-the-way spots. She wondered for a moment about the people he was with, whether the women were women she could talk to, whether they felt embarrassed or sexy or what.

"I know him," said Delia. "I mean I've seen him around town."

"He's just a fag."

"You don't know."

"Sure I do. I can tell."

"What difference does it make if he is?"

"No difference, I suppose."

"Anyway, I bet he's not," said Delia.

He had placed his hands on his hips and was watching them as though they were the intruders, and she could feel Ned begin to gather himself for trouble. But as they passed, the man only waved and called out, "Nice day, isn't it?" Ned opened his hand in brief acknowledgment. Delia replied, "It's glorious," and then, surprising herself, beckoned to the man to join them.

"What if he took you up on it?"

"He wouldn't. I was only being friendly. It's such a beautiful day."

"You'd think the guy would at least sit down before we went by."

Delia smiled, "He's just showing off."

"Nothing much to show, if you ask me."

"Quite a lot, if you ask me."

"That's exactly what he hoped you'd think. You're playing right into his hands."

"Don't be silly." She looked at Ned, then pretended to look back over her shoulder at the naked man. "If I had a body like that, maybe I'd want to show it off too."

"You do, you have a great body," he said, glancing down at her legs. "I can't believe it. It's changed."

"Overnight?"

"Oh, it's always been there, but you know what I mean."

Now, for the first time today, as the sweat began to trickle down her face, she felt completely warmed up, prepared to run to Los Angeles if need be.

"How you feeling?" asked Ned.

"We ought to do that sometime."

"Do what?"

"Go naked on the beach."

"You don't really mean that. Besides, it's illegal."

"It might be fun."

"Besides, most of the people who do it are wimps or exhibitionists, really screwed up."

"You know that for sure?"

"Yes, I do."

They ran for the next ten minutes in silence. She tried to focus her attention not on her husband but on the shimmering blues of the ocean, on the pungent salt-and-tar fragrance in the air, on the dusty green iceplant which covered the bluff behind the beach. When they reached the Point, turned around, and started back the way they had come, Ned increased the pace for a few yards, then seemed to reconsider and slow down.

"It's all right," said Delia, not slowing. "If I can't keep up, you just run on ahead."

"No, I want to stay right with you today. It's important that you don't give up."

"That's not the sort of thing you should tell me, Ned."

He laughed. He must have seen she was right, that it was no good patronizing her, demoralizing her into submission and defeat—not that there was any chance of that anymore. But even on this day when he was trying so hard to demonstrate his consideration for her, he *had* reminded her of past failures.

"There's your friend," Ned said as they approached the naked man again. He was still standing up, but now he was chatting with his companions, who were concealed and prone behind a makeshift driftwood barrier. Ned faced forward and pretended to ignore him, but Delia smiled.

"He certainly is enjoying himself," she said to Ned. "It must be wonderful to just *be* there like that."

"The pervert."

"Oh, Ned, you don't know."

"Delia, I can't understand you. Why don't you join him if you like him so much?"

"I can't," she laughed, "with you here. Otherwise"—she paused to catch her breath—"otherwise there's no telling what I'd do."

"Tired?"

"I feel fine."

Suddenly she heard footsteps behind them—slap, slap, slap, bare feet on the wet sand—and Ned whirled around as the naked man drew even with them, looked from one to the other with a cordial smile, and settled in with their pace. "Hello," he said. "Mind if I try it for awhile?"

"The more the merrier," said Delia. "I guess."

"Welcome aboard," said Ned, startling Delia with an expression she had never heard him use before. Then she looked at the man: his face was handsome all right, bronzed and open, unlined, unblemished, uninteresting. A preener, no doubt. More of a preener even than Ned.

"It's a great day for a run," continued Ned.

"Isn't it?"

They ran three abreast for a hundred yards or so before the naked man turned to Delia and asked, "Are you two married?"

"Of course," she said. "Can't you tell?"

"Sure are," chimed in Ned.

"This is faster than it looks," he said cheerfully. He continued to run with them for a few moments and then dropped behind. "See you again," he called after them.

"Righto," said Ned. Then, to Delia, "Unbelievable. See what you got us into? I just can't believe it."

"What can't you believe?" She reached over and gave him a reassuring tap on the arm. "Don't worry, Ned."

"Something's got to be wrong with that guy."

"So he's a little different."

"People like that can be dangerous. What if you were running alone down here and he came up to you like that?"

Instead of replying, Delia began to run faster and faster, leaving Ned behind, leaving behind a tiny corkscrew of dizziness that had begun to turn in back of her eyes. Despite everything, she felt strong, exuberant, and free, and she could not conceal it. She could no longer monitor his moods, and a part of her wanted to show off and even defeat him. She probably *could* defeat him! At least she had a chance. She already had a lead; besides, he was winded from anger and from talking too much. She knew exactly how he felt: his thighs had become heavy slabs of meat, his lungs bags of rice. He wanted to collapse on the sand.

But instantly she weakened: it weakened her to imagine his discomfort. Shut him out, she told herself, but she could not. He quickly gained on her and then passed—breathing with huge difficulty but passing nevertheless. What allowed him that burst of speed? Basic male strength? Sheer guts? Hatred? Ego? There was a time when she would have smiled and let him go, deferring to his male need to win or whatever it was, but today she couldn't do that.

She was behind him now. He held his arms high and pumped them awkwardly. His legs were fatter than she had ever realized. She found herself concentrating on those legs. She had never been in a position to see his muscles working in quite this way: with his every stride, strong and supple ridges pushed up from beneath the outer softness. But there was more softness than muscle, and the amusing little jiggles at the top of his thighs reminded her of her own legs, reminded her also of her own training: week after week of work, week after week of feeling stronger and stronger. A voice from nowhere spoke gently to her: "Trust your training." She must have read it in a running magazine at the dentist's office. "Trust thyself."

She adjusted to his faster pace, and wondered what he had in mind. What went wrong? She knew he had wanted this day to go smoothly. Had she erred by running ahead of him?

If someone had been watching them from the top of the bluff, he would have seen a man and a woman, one behind the other, the man leaning into the warm wind, his head down, his eyes focused on the sand a few yards ahead, running as if run out, his chest heaving like a dying animal. The woman behind him kept her head up and her eyes on the man. Her legs and arms moved with youthful fluidity, and she seemed merely to be waiting for the right moment to accelerate.

As they passed the place where the abandoned road met the beach, Delia saw by the tracks that the motorcyclists had left; his surliness had succeeded in driving them away, Ned would tell her later that evening. They passed the rocky point and the Standard Oil pier and then swung into the cove where they had begun. Ned remained in front of her; she saw people ahead walking on the beach; it was embarrassing to be running obediently along behind him, embarrassing for him to be trying to beat her. She drew next to him. "How far?" she said. "Can't we stop and walk the rest of the way?" It cost her nothing to speak. He looked at her. His face was red, streaming with sweat. "Log," he groaned, pointing ahead.

At the far end of the cove she saw a bleached driftwood log which must have marked the official end of Ned's daily runs. He was racing her to that log! They ran side-by-side for several yards. "This is fun," she said, "sort of." But it wasn't until days later, after they had parted, that she recalled his reply, a nodding, puffing, "Good for you."

She sprinted ahead of him, aware of herself for a few seconds as triumphant, new to herself, and guilty. Twenty yards from the bleached log, she skidded to a stop and raised her arms victoriously above her head as if she had crossed an imaginary finish line of her own. Ned overtook her—and, instead of stopping, drove on toward the bleached log while she watched him try to make a final kick, his legs as weak and brittle as dead branches. He too raised his arms triumphantly at his own imaginary finish line, and she could almost hear him saying to himself, as she had to herself, "I've won, I've won, I've won." ☐

BARBARA FIALKOWSKI

CHRISTOPHER'S GARDEN

A gentle delivery of air
lifts the birch leaves
in a silver tingle of applause;
all things bow
in his direction. Heat rises
from the heart of the matter:
to sift sand from one
bucket to another
is the fire of rehearsal
and distinction. He discovers
gravity, saying, *this is my*
jungle-island. My savage
child. Where did he come
from? His vowels
repeating, rise above his head.
They are the sun and moon,
and he, the boy who
put them there.

ii)

Beyond us, autumn's sheer
shimmer. Winter trees
expose their nests
like the breasts of unabashed
hags. Something comes over
me and he says, *oh my god,*
mommy, I'm scared. In another
life, I opened myself up
to him, took him in. The clatter
of shadowless gods like rain
flooded our brains. I was his
oval image of light and he,
the apple of my eye. I was
everything he knew and he
gave himself up, willingly,
to my sleep.

iii)

Such is the pain
of the on-looker: to have seen
everything twice. Heat
rises from the asphalt
like a migraine aura. He swims
toward me mouthing what looks
like my name. I float back,
draw him out, a tide holding him
in suspension. This is the still
moment of birth, the time I
decide to die for him, to die
of him. Sing, *cut the sac,*
as you must, and forget
what comes tumbling after.
In Christopher's garden,
there is no place for me.

UNCLASSIFIEDS

COFFEE CONSCIOUS

The odor of freshly ground coffee beans filled the air. The shop displayed all the devices of the new coffee renaissance which has swept America. Filters, clay pots and mugs, machines which through the use of extreme pressure recreated with authenticity the strong syrupy coffees of the Mediterranean. A long way from the percolator, the bop-bed-ditty-bop that you could hear in kitchens displaying with pride their new formica counter-tops. When coffee came in two pound tin cans with plastic measuring scoops that were perfect for burning insects in and for other acts of childhood.

Sitting behind the counter sipping from a tiny espresso cup was the owner of the shop. He was a surprisingly big man. Robust he was, with all of the friendliness that one has come to expect from a man his size. Victor would jump up from his seat the moment a customer walked into the shop. It wasn't clear if it was the coffee which had this affect, or perhaps it was a desire to break the boredom that would come between the one or two customers he saw per hour.

"What will it be today?" Victor greeted a customer.

"I would like a pound of Mocha Java," the man who had just walked in replied.

"Listen," Victor interjected. His tone was almost conspiratorial. "I've just gotten in some wonderful Viennese beans."

With that Victor dug his hands deep into a bin holding the rich dark brown Viennese coffee beans. He held a handful up to his nose and took a tremendous whiff.

"Here." He offered his hands to the customer, cajoling him to take a sniff as well.

"Hmm, lovely," was the man's response. "Okay then. A pound of that ground for filter."

Victor smiled. He quickly ground the beans and poured them into a one pound bag. As he was folding the bag closed he stopped.

"Do you hear that," Victor said.

"Huh"

Victor explained, "That's Wagner's *Freutulde.*"

The music which had been playing since he had first entered the shop became apparent to the customer.

"Ah," the man said. "A pretty piece."

Victor sat down on the stool behind the counter. He spoke slowly. "It reminds me of Vienna, Christmas nineteen-sixty-three." He savored the memory as he would a freshly ground coffee bean. It was something current, and tangible like an odor.

"We would sit and sip coffee and . . . why, I remember we went to the symphony hall. It was having its first concert since being partially destroyed during the war. Christmas eve. Nineteen hundred and sixty-three. It was a full program. Beethoven and Wagner all night. And at dawn a champagne breakfast."

He paused and said, "Vienna was a beautiful city, but I suppose all river cities are. Paris, London. . . ."

Victor stopped talking. The odor had lost its clarity.

"I've never been to any of the places you mentioned," the customer said, "but they must've been lovely."

"I was a teacher there," said Victor. He took another deep breath. "Taught history. I was with the University of Maryland's European program for years. When I came back to the states I discovered that historians weren't in great demand.

"Listen," he said putting a finger to his lips.

The Wagner was coming to a particularly emotional part.

"Mushy stuff," Victor commented. "But it holds certain memories."

At that Victor took the five dollar bill that the customer had laid on the counter several minutes before. He gave back the change and wished him good health. The customer took his coffee and left the shop.

Victor stood silently for a moment and then walked over to the stereo. He increased the volume on the Wagner piece. He then dug his hands deep into the bin of Viennese beans and brought a huge handful to his face. He inhaled deeply. A large grin spread across his face. He sat down; the champagne breakfast had yet to begin. —*Richard Silberg*

OMNI THE MAGNIFICENT

Omni is King. Not old-fashioned, but a modern-day, all-powerful, oil-rich king who speaks through an orderly array of Oxford-educated aides, is respected, if not liked, by most factions of his people (a growing people, since the boundaries of his country have recently been twice enlarged, once by the aggressive tactic of war; and again by a more subtle blockade on the little nation of Yeetsia) and who seems as safe in his sovereignty as any mortal monarch might expect to be.

Omni has been married three times. The first wife, his childhood love Katsia, was killed in a Jeep crash. Omni, who is feverish about omens, will not ride in or allow anyone he loves to ride in a Jeep or any other American Motors vehicle. His second bride, an American beauty named Bahrbara Fahr, left him soon after a stormy honeymoon in Gstaad, the settlement apparently the rubies with which she now eclipses even the lights of Studio 54. For his third wife Omni, ever the pacesetter, selected a Chinese girl he first spotted in a newsreel close-up of the Red Guard. Once out of her drab land and into his gifts of *haute couture* and jewels, seen against the backdrop of yacht or limousine, she has blossomed into such exquisite beauty that in her homeland (behind closed doors) she is compared to those tiny queens on the ancient embroideries, those composed of such miniscule, perfect stitches the seamstresses often went blind from the effort of their composition.

Omni's obsessions are interwoven: omens, power (*his* power), the power of omens, the Great Powers (America, China, Russia) and his power over them, oil. If he could, without anyone's seeing, he would bathe in oil, just as it comes from the ground. As it is, he has vials of his black gold in view wherever he eats, sleeps, works, or makes love. His father, father's father, father's father's father before him bought power through chicanery and the absurd taxes one could gather—no, choke—out of poverty; camels; contraband. Only to Omni did the earth, like a dancer lifting her veils, reveal her secret. Oil. He could (and has) eaten it, perfumed his wives' loins with it, bowed down before it. Because of it the whole world calls him King, Your Majesty, Omnipotent; Most Reverend and Revered. Jew or Arab, Gentile or Communist—however they label themselves, they bow in unison before him. No man or woman has ever entered his palace office without touching face to the floor before him. That, he tells himself, is *power.*

But power's silent partner is fear, distrust. "The nail that stands up shall be hammered down," Soong says, surprising him with her intuitiveness. "No," she says meekly, "it is just an old Oriental saying that happened to pop into my head."

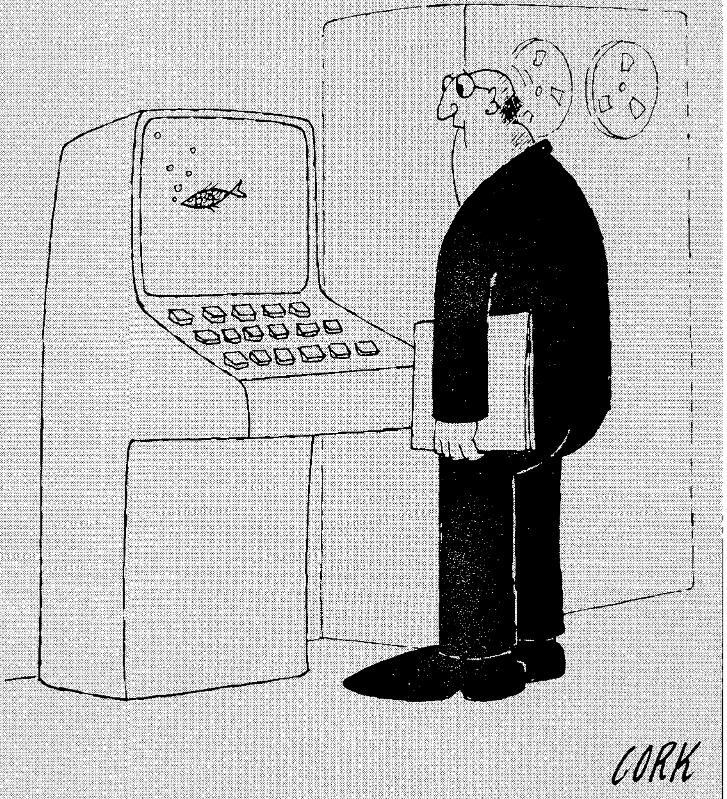
Omni is obsessed also with assassination, as well he might be: he is the first of his dynasty to reach fifty. Unsuccessfully his enemies have blown poison darts across the palace walls, loosed rabid bats down the chimneys, hurled grenades and bombs and vials of acid, sabotaged airplanes, cars, boats, trucks, and, he suspects, sawed in two the tie-rod end on the Jeep in which Katsia was riding— in which he also would have been clinging to that high cliff curve, if not for a momentary bout with dyspepsia. And so he wears a perfectly-tailored, pencil-thin, bullet-proof body suit. Every vehicle he enters is guarded 24 hours a day, and moves only as the innermost core of a fleet of like vehicles: Travelalls or helicopters or camels or Lear Jets. Human, animal, and electronic guards surround him always—if out-of-sight, then just beyond the curtain or door. Sometimes Soong's love-squeals set one or another of them off, titillating the palace eunuchs.

If ever Omni laughs it is a reserved *ho-ho-ho*, much like that of the American Santa Claus who visits his children each December 24 (stepping out of an Air Force helicopter, bent over with presents, while an Air Force band plays "Jingle Bells"). There are three children: the crown prince, son of Katsia; and tiny twin almond-eyed princesses Soong has produced in her own image. Not fearing for them as he does for the prince, Omni spoils them disgracefully and seems happiest with one perched sleepily on each knee while he works. When a governess brings the little princesses in to meet Great People their little silk dresses shimmer, and, when they are curtsied and bowed to, the greatest jewels and eyes of the world blinkle and twink in obeisance.

In the basement of the Palace, a story or two below ground (only Omni's bomb shelter lies deeper) there are a few special cells where would-be assassins are kept. These prisoners—their treatment—are another of Omni's obsessions. Former Third Reich experts, imported from Argentina, help him there. Whenever the nightmare returns (of Katsia's head, severed by the open Jeep's windshield, rolling and rolling down the hills until at last her long hair tangles in a shrub and holds) he goes below.

And on the top floor, in a spire built centuries before, there is an observatory only Omni enters, the guards waiting on the landing below. Here he watches the stars twinkle and blink, his naked eye piercing the clear cold air, the old and new teachings that crowd his head paling in comparison. They have always fascinated him, the stars. Intuitively he knows that his birth and death are charted there, despite science. Whatever else he does, he does not tamper with the stars. There is no space program in his country, and astrology is outlawed.

His hair is turning gray. Though his mother encourages him to try Grecian Formula (now *that* is American ingenuity, simply to comb it in, *youth-in-a-bottle*) as she does, raven-haired at eighty-seven, he refuses. He is a survivor, the first of his male line to reach fifty, who is going to grow old and die a natural death, he is determined. His great grandfather was stuck like a pig, with pitchforks. His grandfather was gathered up in baskets. His father used to tell him the story, to bring home the importance of never relaxing, never taking the smallest instance of life for granted—



until he, too, was blown to smithereens, by a smaller, more modern bomb blooming in the face of a potted cactus, gift of a friend. Omni shows the suspected would-be assassins the gray, taunting them. In his spire close to the heavens he talks aloud to the stars, thanking them for his half a century. In his good dream the stars talk to him— softly, like whispering— telling him that he will grow old and white-bearded like the Jews' god; that he will live forever.

"Oh, Omni! My Omni!" Soong squeals. A guard dog leaps onto their naked feet, then backs down, in confusion. Electronic beams shoot back and forth above their heads, lighting up the room.

Omni's fourteen year old son has grown hostile to him. The boy resents the restrictive life; the fear. Perhaps he believes the ugly stories that it was Omni who planned Katsia's death; that he was already involved with Bahrbara Fahr; that an aborted fetus is buried in the rose garden under the ruby-eyed statue. The boy dreams, not of being King, but of traveling across Europe incognito, staying in youth hostels. Omni shakes his head, grateful for the little princesses who balance on his knees as he studies the new missile blueprints. They are fascinated by the great prism that is his diamond stickpin.

Today they move to the Summer Palace. It is not only Omni's retreat, it is his final fortress against the world, his sanctuary *extraordinaire*. Located in uncharted desert, surrounded by Sealed Beam Missiles as well as a compendium of every safety device ever successfully used in his kingdom, it is a place where he feels able to relax. Through a skylight over his bed he watches the stars in their slow progression. He dozes, wakes, dozes, thinking: *My son can never eclipse me, as I have eclipsed my fathers before me, for I am a true King, fulfilling Destiny. My enemies, even if they should succeed, cannot efface my memory, for I am Omni the Magnificent, known already in the history books of almost every land.* The stars are not so impressive here. The light of his own glory seems almost as bright as he dozes, wakes, dozes, Soong dreaming peacefully against him.

Is it only his imagination, or does one star grow brighter, even as he watches? It seems to be breaking loose from the sky, to be bearing down on him, a molten piece of the heavens heading straight for the plexiglass skylight. He tries to open his mouth, to warn Soong, to call the guards, but he is impotent as a prisoner, mute as if his tongue had been ripped from his mouth. Choking with fear, he sees the plexiglass shatter and then, his spirit leaving his body, he looks back down at himself impaled like some vampire by a burnt-out, twisted stake of some indescribable metal, Soong cowering in the corner, screaming, her cries like storm-clashed windchimes, the guards knocking each other down in their mad racing back and to.

And then his spirit, hovering now unhampered by walls or gravity, blanches at the media coverage. POTENTATE FIRST VICTIM OF SPACE GARBAGE. KING CONKED BY SPACE LITTER— USSR OR USA TO BLAME?

The ignominy! His spirit cringes. Even the funeral is not carried off with much dignity, the death is so ignominious! He sees the historians in their offices, already preparing the manuscripts, their faces alight with delight at how his death shall eclipse his life . . . how they love the ignominy!

"Omni," Soong whispers, stroking his brow, "is it the nightmare again, about your wife? Here, wake up, hold me— it's not so bad now, is it?" Omni lies sweating, shielding his eyes from the harsh glare of the stars. How can he tell her that this one is even worse? The stars— if even the stars should turn against him, what then? He must think it through, he reasons calmly, the omens involved, but his heart races ahead of his thoughts, refusing to be quieted. Is it his imagination, or did he dream Katsia's death in such detail even before it happened?

"If you don't mind," he tells Soong, loosening her hold on him, "I think I'll get up and do some reading." The guards stiffen at their posts, trying to look awake; the dogs wag their tails at him. At this time of night there is a beautiful quietness, especially in his office where the carpet almost swallows his slippered feet. He wishes he could sort the facts, old teaching from new, myth from reality. Reassuringly he runs his hand through his hair. "I shall grow old," he reminds himself, wondering if it would wake the twins, if he went in to look at them, at this hour. *—Bennie Lee Sinclair*

ROBERT LOUTHAN

THE NEW CONTEMPORARY POEM

"Certain words come up in this poetry over and over again, carrying a heavy burden of portentousness in each instance: wings, jewels, stones, silence, breath, snow, blood, eats, water, light, bones, roots, glass, absence, sleep, and darkness."

"How To Read The New Contemporary Poem"
Paul Breslin, *The American Scholar*

It reveals the tedious connection
between your breath, blood, and bones,
then strands you in a landscape
where that doesn't matter: where wings,
though they are roots embedded in flight
and absorb nourishment from it,
are severed, supporting only the absence
of a bird who ate light that glittered
in broken glass; where snowflakes,
jewels cut from stone clouds,
are too precious to consist of water
as they decorate those flapping feathers;
and where the profoundest truth comes out:
sleep contains silence and darkness.

ACROSS

Begun in early morning blackness the closeness of the car's environment surrounds moving, not yet the faintest light of dawn but behind already a snail trail past of dried stickiness peeling back. The car is running well and nothing is forgotten. Fit to cross the continent.

Passing, past and gone into the westward turnpike tunneled day to hurry through the bland familiarity of the first states on the way. Pennsylvania stolid, constant, big. Ohio like the backyard of a cataclysm, hilled and suburbed, wan, languid, smug and strained. Indiana is the first to show the loomings of the West. In Centerville, the dead ground zero mean belly button sociologically computed random former middle average point of what we used to like to think we were, in this little town blocked up against the Ohio line most of the stores are either closed or boarded up, the paint is going from the signs, the streetlights are left on through the day. It would be right to stop a while in Centerville to talk, to ask, to stand by here to wait and watch, but creeping through town there are no people anywhere and nothing much at all may ever happen here again. Accelerate and the rest of Indiana passes toward the bottomland scrub willow country of the approaching Wabash, then the Mississippi.

Parabola of burnished steel, the round patterns of buffing wheels evident looking from the base with cheek pressed on the steel and eye cocked up the plane of sight until far on high albedo sun reflection overwhelms and leaves a final arching glare. From the top see the Gate Way Arch both sides drop away below gasp vertigo like being in an airplane cockpit on takeoff as the wheels are going up. Thousands of people a day to the top to muse out the thick glass angled windows staring down into the smog and blank space as from a diving bell, the detail blurring out to gray horizon obscure middle distance down away. The big river, the railroad yards, the garbage burning dumps, transmission lines and warehouse industry of East St. Louis like an ocean bottom field of littered sand and detritus silted down out of the carboned turbidity of the reefbank of the city's downtown office building business blocks westward just behind seen from the windows on the other side. When the high plains winds come booming in to clear the city's air of waste it is possible to see up river fifteen miles to where the Missouri sweeps in, the meeting place of people for over twenty thousand years, there where the two big rivers join, a place of decisions, palavers, encampments, marking stakes. But even when the air is clear, the water of both now is globbed hopelessly with factory sludge.

Prairie pressed consciousness, Kansas means hanging thunderstorms, quartz-touched asphalt roads, rolling horizon crests, stream bottom swales and shallow bluffs, cottonwoods, meadowlarks, long town streets of Lawrence, Salina, Hutchinson, with trees and houses set back big lawns around. And high sun over wheat, low aureole sun over blowing snow, cloudiness and mud, open indistinct faces, fast season changing touch of wind, wide sky deep brilliant lightedness, sloughs with ducks and killdeer, emptiness in wind. Here clear and in the West for sure. While back behind the Lincoln Tunnel is jammed and trucks are roaring crunching down into lower gears above the nasal singing of the tunnel guards into the carbon stinging air. And down along the estuaries of the Chesapeake the redwing blackbirds are balanced on the cattails singing their gurgling, liquid CONK-KAR-REEs and up and down the East trains, buses, the airlines, all the transportation grooves are moving people back and forth in downcast earnestness.

Into Colorado and south along the Rockies' front, entering off the high plains up the Arkansas River Gorge, trout pools and mountain willow bars, climbing into the mountains closing in on sky. Along behind the Sangre de Cristos that arc up from New Mexico to climb past Salida up the grades of Poncha Pass, a full nine thousand feet before back down into the San Luis Valley and up again over Wolf Creek Pass, almost eleven thousand high. Full power in these mountains with their piling clouds and canyon boulders, full breadth and clarity of place.

Mesa Verde rising high and clean above New Mexico where the air is soft and deep pre-Columbian piñon pine rustle pueblo adobe walls kiva sunk beneath the slabbed and weathered cliff overhangs of silent rock in a past as dead and clean and beautiful as the twisted trunks of brittle manzanita outside the pueblo walls. Indians past, Indians gone. The dry open vastness down through the Ute Reservation, Four Corners, to Teec Nos Pos where two Navajos pass in a pickup with a third, braids, turquoise-silver hat band, very old, steadies an angora goat in the bouncing bed behind. Squalid hogans, junked cars, sheep fence around the government school with papers blowing in the hot wind out of the flaring Monument Valley Arizona Navajo country to the west that shimmers on unbroken, Kayenta, Tuba City, Window Rock, all Navajo, except the Hopi Reservation just below, until the Kaibab Plateau rises, sliced, eroded endlessly by the Colorado.

And down in Kingman, before the Arizona-California line, a little Buddha black boy goes into a restaurant in the velvet dusk and comes out with an old man in tow who kills the rattlesnake the boy has seen winding near the sidewalk in the mercury vapor light. The old man takes it by the tail and garbage cans it to the side and then invites the boy back inside to have a piece of pie.

There near the California line people hitchhike in the desert night to avoid the heat and light. They wait. Set to cross the last barrier of dreams, the last volitional act, their final stitch across the meta-sandtable of America, to cross the desert and top the pass at El Cajon where the smog blows through thick, opaque and gaseous as though it could roll back and leave a genie waiting at each comer's beck and call. But then out of the desert, down off the pass descending in the smog, there is no genie but just Los Angeles below.

—*D.E. Steward*

FOR THE BIRDS

She didn't hear them come up from behind until a camera clicked. Turning, she saw the photographer snapping furiously with an Arri 2-C lens. "It's a trogon," he whispered. The speaker was lean and tall; a dark man with a well-made outdoor face, mutely tanned. Her husband, a famous naturalist, told her how elusive the trogon was, so she sensed the photographer's excitement. She knew his camera because she was a fashion model, that 'bird' whose windswept hair was coaxed out of place by jet streams of an electric fan and multiplied by the presses.

Exchanging silent greetings, they kept the bird in focus until it lit off. She hardly noticed his buddy; short, wishbone thin, wearing baggy green khakis, with a chaos of red hair framing avian features. When they walked away, she dropped back, hearing one say to the other, "Peter, hand me the guide." So his name was 'Peter,' she thought. And an ant-sized pulse began to beat in her lip.

She spent that weekend in the bird sanctuary. Her husband was working on a new book. Often she would stare out the window and watch 'Peter' while her husband was off watching birds. He was an employee of the Conservancy; the emblem on his T-shirt told her that. Absorbed by his hands fixing a fence with wirecutters, she recalled first kisses. And those continuous loops first love fanned on her arm as she worried what butterfly breasts would become when touched. Keeping her fantasy in motion, she imagined climbing Box Canyon with 'Peter.' The ascent tranquilized and gave breath. Helping her up the last steep part, he stood face to face with her and she anticipated what slush of wind, what birdcall, what shadow dancing on whose cheek would sanction the embrace that drew them closer without hands.

Home now for a week; he lingered in her thoughts. She arranged daffodils in a tall vase, one by one, lonely for him. Toying with breakfast, she listened to an old Simon and Garfunkel album, singing intermittent riffs of *Bridge over Troubled Water*, pushing her plate away. An untouched fried egg stared into space like a cyclops but the music sustained her.

The phone rang. She did ballet exercises to the tune of her husband's voice. If she could finish 33 leg raises before he hung up that meant 'Peter' was thinking of her. Portents were always more important than probity; she lived off them. Thirty-three! Husband's kisses came in a round of clicking champagne toasts before the phone went dead.

Suddenly happy she floated into the bedroom throwing off her short nightdress. Falling into the mirror, she smiled at the self everyone said was beautiful. A breeze fanned her hair and she thought about her grandmother who had visions. Only one thing needed to be done.

She wrote him a letter. Afterwards, lying back on the bed, she held it up to the light, tracing the watermark.

His reply came by return mail. Letters passed between them. It was arranged. The night before, she soaked in a slow bath and painted toenails red. Belted into her seat, she was a woman caught in a time warp, about to live out a fantasy.

Her heart pumped ten speeds, scanning faces. The long muscle in her leg twitched. Minutes passed, second by second. She turned the ring on her finger. Suddenly pressing forward, extending nervous hands and smiling tentatively, a chaos of red hair scorched her vision. —*Roberta Metz*

KATHLEEN LIGNELL

PAPER FISH

If we had known what lures to attract
each other by, I would wrap myself
with algae, drift on the surface
like an open invitation,
and take the fish in hand.

Flat in my palm, fish swimming
all night in the North Atlantic,
you begin to flip and curl
in the heated wrinkles of my palm.
You are an answer for the herring
of Maine, the eternal white tide
that intends to be kept a secret.

When I cup my hands in the dark, warm
over the dorsal fins, I see the membrane
of light between my fingers
and feel your cellophane tail.
At dawn, when I wake
with my fistful of crumpled paper,
I can still see the memory of light
shining through your fins.
I put on my shoes
and walk down to the shore
where the river opens
to the bay.

A wave breaks.
Once there were salmon in every stream
and they were the fish
whose bodies flung themselves
against the falls.

I feel your body in my pocket,
foolish, frail, all orange
for autumn, as if you were dressed
for an expedition in the forest.
The palm of my hand is burning.
But the tide, the cold morning light,
have stilled you now.

TO BUILD A HOUSE AND LIVE IN IT

A house until inhabited is nails and boards. Sly movements of footfalls and sneezes on wallpaper make it real.

You sit and fill blank pages with scribbles and columns of boardfeet and R-factors. Years slip by.

A wife asks: so, drawing again. No, you say, designing the gameroom. She says, don't forget the spare bedroom for Mother. You divorce her. She was too Baptist anyway. You draw.

A lover uses the folder filled with plans to list wedding guests. You move out as her sister hems the gown.

You marry an architect. She improves your drawings. Adding perspective, she says. Drinking has become a problem for you. You hit her—once. She sues you for divorce and slaps back with alimony payments that force you to get a real job.

You continue to draw, alone now, free to spend as long as you want figuring stress points, scoping materials, picking shake shingles. More years pass.

An uncle dies. He had money and you are his only nephew. A piece of property near a lake is perfect. You can see that for yourself. You buy it. A foundation is staked out and plumb lines of string are stretched out to show where the walls of bedrooms and bathrooms will be.

And you sit doodling. The lake breeze tatters the colored flags that outline what just may be your kitchen. —*N.P. Silbaugh*

CONVERSATION WITH MOON

He speaks of the moon—how it is eating almost palpably at his soles, and he pulls the drapes as it fattens, buys more and heavier shoes, telling no one, and yes, she understands, she says, and begins pouring his tea, but pauses briefly to muse on a barely perceptible imperfection on the cup's surface. Honey? she asks, interrupting, and he looks at her as if for the first time, and lapses into silence. Yes, she says eagerly, picking up the thread, I feel it too, glistening into my window, confusing my dreams, but where can we go? The telephone rings and she speaks excitedly of the moon, new china, and imminent departure. Finally, she goes to bed and sleeps fitfully.

Rising early with a sense of urgency, she dresses, skips breakfast, and races downtown to buy new china cups, a pair of shoes for winter and, of course, a hat. When she returns he asks when she will be ready to leave. She looks confused, denies everything, and cries when he ignores her new things. He is silent over dinner and she notices a crack in the serving platter, though she says nothing, talking instead of the sea, its beautiful dreams, its distance. The salt smell is in the room, the sound of waves envelops her and she is rapt, failing to notice his darkening eyes, his legs dissolving beneath the table. She rises to clear the remains, but shatters a plate, and is shaken. He comforts her, and they make love before she goes to sleep. Later she will buy more dishes, new clothes, perhaps a piece of furniture. He will speak of the moon vanishing more and more each night. —*Barry Silesky*

AUTO EXCHANGE

I sold my 1960 racing green Comet for one hundred dollars and used the money as part of our plane fare to the Virgin Islands. I had only owned the auto for a few months; it was my first car.

Ten days after we arrived in St. Thomas, Phillip and I bought a battered Volkswagen. The brakes went out three different times and, once, the steering stuck while I was driving down the mountain to Charlotte Amalie. I ran into one of those huge jungle vines. Two and a half months later, we sold it for one hundred dollars and used the money on a ticket back to the States.

The 1958 Jeep stationwagon cost us seven hundred and seventy-five dollars. My seat was harder than Phillip's, dark green, like the outside paint, and it would fold forward, twice, to make steps into the wagon section. Sometimes we slept in the back, in sleeping bags or on a mattress, but mostly I lay back there alone, smoking cigarettes and drinking beer, while Phillip drove. The Jeep had a hole near the four-wheel-drive gear shift. On hot Southern days the air steamed from that hole; during sudden summer thunderstorms Phillip's feet got soaked when he shifted. The windshield wipers speeded up with acceleration, but with town speed they went so slowly they simply became another visual obstacle; then, Phillip put his head out the side window to see. The Jeep went with Phillip, and I've heard it's sitting up on blocks.

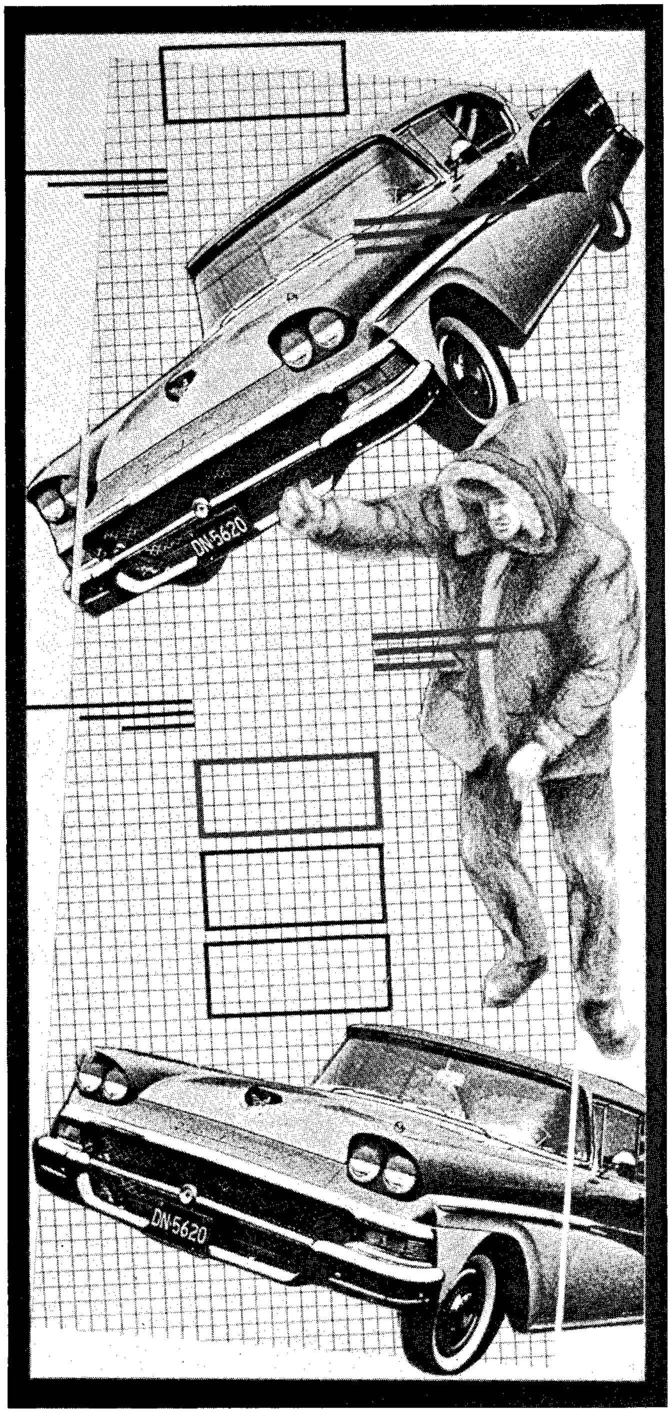
Phillip and I had bought the Volvo after its previous owner heaved a large rock through the front windshield. It cost seventy-five dollars; Phillip found another '60 Volvo in a junk yard off River Road, and exchanged windshields. After I put my Easy Does It sticker on the bumper I felt as if I had always owned it. I threw all the pictures of Phillip away but I kept the snaps of the auto. When I left Phillip, he kept the Volvo too, even though it was supposed to be mine.

During one of the periods when both the Jeep and the Volvo were not working, Phillip's father bought a Vega for me. It was a little stationwagon and only a couple of years old, but it never ran very well, either. First the transmission went out and then, six months later, the engine locked. I coasted to the side of the highway, thirty-eight miles from town, fifty yards from a burnt-out house, two miles from a telephone. Phillip came and got me with the green Jeep. He chained the Vega and pulled it to town; I steered while he towed. The car never once responded the way I intended and I had no control over how fast we went, so occasionally I braked and steered against Phillip. He was furious with me. After the divorce Phillip took the Vega, since the other cars weren't reliable, and he hung string and feathers from the rear-view mirror.

When Phillip and I separated, I borrowed a thousand dollars from my parents and bought a Volkswagen Beetle with fifteen thousand miles on it. I still have the VW; it's a fine car. It's beige and the odometer stopped years ago at 39,995.6. —*Ann Bunting*

J. P. WHITE

KENTUCKY RUNAWAYS



I hitched to Wa Keeny in two rides out of Kansas City. Wind, clawing at my face, made me regret leaving the cheer of an old friend's house. But it was New Year's Eve. I wanted to be back home with Penny.

My parka was no match for the Kansas cold. It was a big, floppy thing with a lot of pockets. My father had worn it when he was stationed in the Aleutian Islands off Alaska. Now, the wind crept under its hem and turned it into a skirt.

The highway swirled with blowing snow. Ice thickened over the passing lane. I might as well have been standing on the bow of an icebreaker, off Alaska. I stamped my feet and puffed on a White Owl. God knows I don't like the taste of cigars, but I warmed at its small glow in my cupped hands. I held out my sign with a crumpled mitt. It read "Big Sky Country." I was headed for Ft. Collins, Colorado, but I liked the hum of Montana's license plate slogan. "Big Sky Country" said a lot about why I lived in the West, pounding nails, pouring concrete, doing whatever I could for wages.

Even in winter, when the rest of the country pulled a gray tarp over its head, the West woke up to blue sky. That blue cracked me open, made me feel gutsy, happy enough to ya-hoo anything out of key. That blue was worth going home to. Even if I had to thumb across Kansas to get to it.

In two hours, only a couple of semis sizzled past. Then, nothing for another hour. I took after the first car that slid on the ice and stopped. As cold as I was, I hesitated before climbing in. The car was an early model Fairlane convertible, with the side facing me smashed in. The rest of the car was dented or dinged. The vinyl back window was slashed open. I glanced at the tires, slick and wobbly on the rims. I shook my head. The door swung open.

"Hi," I said, "where you headed?"

"Californ-i-a," a girl replied.

"I'm going to Denver."

"Is that on the way to California?"

"Yep"

"Well, get in then, no sense standing out in the cold."

I jumped in next to the girl and threw my bag in the back seat. She wore no overcoat. Just a tight-fitting black sweater that clung to her skimpy ribs. She held her thin blond hair off her face with a clip. When she coughed, she shuffled her white, pointy boots that zipped in the back.

"My name's Drew Hitchcock."

"I'm Jenny and this here is Sam."

I reached over and shook his hand. It was an awkward greeting because he had his nose pressed to the glass. He was hunched over the wheel, trying to see out a patch he'd cleared on the windshield. The car had no heater.

"Sorry, it's so goddamn cold in here." Jenny said. "Have some of this blanket." She draped the blanket over my knees, tucked it in around my boot-tops.

I was glad to be moving again, but if the highway had been an icebreaker, their car was an icebox. I didn't know which was worse. The interior was a mess. The front seat was torn. I was sitting on stuffing and could feel the bite of springs. The glove compartment was missing. There was no key in the ignition. The back seat was only springs. Wind ripped through the hole in the back window and raked our necks. I didn't see any luggage anywhere, just a jug on the backseat floor.

The car's shocks were gone, too. Everytime we hit a bump, the car jolted, started to skid. But Sam was a wheeler. He knew how to coast and slide along the grip of the road's edge. Once the car entered a corkscrewing skid, Sam floated her back through ice ridges like Johnny Rutherford banking a curve. It didn't calm my nerves any that he drove better than 70 mph. That two-time-totaled car shook like it was the end of this life or the beginning of another.

"Where your from?" I asked.

"Kin-tucky," Sam said.

"What takes you to California?"

"Land of Milk and Honey."

"What you gonna do out there?"

"Don't rightly know. But I reckon something will turn up."

Sam looked older than Jenny, but not by much. The stubble on his chin was not filled in over his lip. His black hair was matted over his ears. Clumps of hair ran along his knuckles. He looked like a boy who picked up a shovel when he was ten and became a man. Sam was maybe 16.

"How long you been on the road?"

"A week, maybe more."

"That's a long time from Kentucky. You been stopping to see friends?"

"You sure ask a lot of questions."

"Just trying to make conversation. It's a long way to Colorado."

"Should we tell him," Jenny said, leaning over to grab Sam's shoulder.

"Yeah, sure, what the hell."

"See . . . what's your name?"

"Drew"

"See, Drew, Sam and me we'ze running away."

"Why you doing that?"

"Cause it's the only way we could be together," Jenny said. "Sam was in trouble for running moonshine. Cops gonna make him stand trial for something he had no hand in."

I gulped, didn't stir, though my lips mumbled a chatter. I wanted Jenny to keep talking. But Sam stepped in.

"My daddy got a still. Me and my two brothers was working it good. Daddy was tending fires, cooking down the mash. I was running it from town to town. We made good money. Lots of cash. Nobody kept no records. Built ourselves a house. Bought me a fast car."

Sam broke off his story to rub clean his looking-glass hole in the windshield. I fidgeted in the seat, pulled the blanket up to my chin.

"Things were going good, but then something happened. Another man, Jack Little, wanted Daddy to clear out, so he'd have the business all's to himself. Daddy wouldn't budge. Told him there was plenty of drunks for all of us. One night, Jack followed me on my runs. I had a big load of honeydew in the trunk. I was highballing a back road, doing my usual 75 to 80. I see these headlights pop up out of nowheres. Jack rams my back end. Keeps ramming it. I'm spinning the wheel, fixin to hang on no matter what. But then, the sons a bitch speeds up, hits me broadside. I go into a skid. Roll the car over a ravine. That rebel yell in the trunk lights up like a fireball. I got thrown just before the car blew. Another kid in my car got killed. Cops hauled me in, said I was stinking drunk. But I never had a drop. Manslaughter, they called it, even though I told them about Jack Little ramming me. They'd hear nothing bout him. So, I skipped bail and got Jenny. We stole this junker off a lot and cleared out in the middle of the night."

"We wanted to be together, anyways," Jenny added. "The trouble with Jack Little just got us moving down the road a little quicker than we'd planned."

I used the heel of my hand to scrub a peep hole in my side window. Mile after mile of Kansas cornfields inched past. A few stalks stood up in their furrows, braved a blast of wind. Sparrows pecked dirt. Their beaks dropped seeds, too cold to crack.

"Where you been staying at night?"

"We just pull off the road somewheres, curl up in the front seat," Jenny said with a smile.

"Don't you have any money?"

"No, we come all the way from Corbin on church donations."

"Church donations?"

"Yeah, we stop whenever we need to fill the tank and ask churches for money."

"What do you tell them?"

"We tell 'um the truth. We stand there together, holding hands like we always do, and tell 'um we're in love. We're trying to get to California and that's all that matters."

"Speaking of churches," Sam said, "We're gonna have to stop somewheres, pretty soon."

"Burlington, Colorado is about 35 miles from here," I said, "Can we make it till then?"

"You bet, partner."

I reached into my pack and dug out emergency provisions: some apples, cheese and peanuts. I needed something to eat. My lips felt numb. I offered them what I had. They devoured it.

We swerved off the exit ramp into Burlington around 7 o'clock. The temperature reading at the bank was 5-below. God, I was freezing. Sam and Jenny never complained about the cold.

"How do you know what church to go to?"

"We always try the Congregation-a-lists first. Them's the most lax with the money," Jenny said.

We drove all over town but couldn't find a Congregationalist church. Sam and Jenny knocked on a Baptist church, but nobody was there. They tried a Catholic church, no one there either. On the third try, I was beginning to believe their story was hooey and we'd never get out of that town. But then Jenny came back with a smile on her face. Sam's face was all twisted up like he was solving a puzzle.

"We got a church 'ef-e-david' for $4.00 worth of gas," Jenny said. "But first we got to go to the police station for an ID check."

"Sam, do you think you should go?" I asked. "Won't they have a record of you jumping bail."

"I don't think so. Colorado's a long way from Kintucky. I don't think they would know about us out here, do you, honey?"

"No, I don't think there's nothing to worry about. We'll just tell the cops the truth. We got nothing to fear."

Sam hesitated. "You got any money?"

"A couple of bucks is all," I replied.

"Then, we got to risk it."

We found the police station in the center of town next to the fire department. The two of them went in. I stayed in the car. They were gone for hours, it seemed. A shiver shot up my spine from my feet. What the hell was I doing in that car, colder than any stretch of highway, with two minors, damn near illiterate, and wanted in Kentucky for manslaughter? God, I should have taken a bus. I'd be home by now.

Then I saw them come out towards the car. A cop was with them. I hid under the blanket. I didn't want to get caught with those two characters. Who knows, maybe I'd get pinned for "aiding and abetting a minor." The cop wrote down their license plate, but never opened the car door. I knew he couldn't see me through the windshield. I pinched my leg. I didn't hurt, but I could feel my thumb nail break skin. They came back, smiling, hugging each other.

"What happened?"

"Nothing," Sam said. "Just a lot of hogwash bout parent's consent and birth certificates. They tried calling our homes, but no one answered. And we ain't got no certificates of any kind. They called the minister and he put in a good word. They had nothing on us, so they let us go, on account of it being New Year's."

"It's funny they didn't ask you for your car's registration or title."

"What's that?"

Sam touched the ignition wires together and we backed out of the police station. At the Mini-Mart where we stopped for gas, I went in and spent my last two dollars on three cups of coffee and some cookies.

"Hey, thanks," Sam said. "But I got something that'll really fire up your wagon."

He reached in the backseat for the jug I'd seen earlier. He took a good long slug.

"Take a swig of this. It'll do you good and hep you too."

I held the jug to my lips, balancing it on my arm like I'd seen him do. The liquid hit the back of my throat like a struck match. My eyes watered. My head went heavy like I was wearing a pumpkin. But my next slug swished down smooth, more like a mountain stream than fire. Jenny grabbed the jug and took a healthy shot. By the time we pulled out on the interstate at 9:00 o'clock, we were leaning against each other, playing tic-tac-toe on the frosted windshield.

I played x's and they played o's. We passed that jug around again. Sam hung on the wheel like a champ braced for the 15th round. His eyes never left the opening he'd rubbed just above the steering wheel. He clicked on the radio that didn't work and sang, "Take that ribbon from your hair, shake it loose and let it fall, all I'm asking is your time, hep me make it thru the nite."

Pretty soon we were all singing highway songs. Some of the songs got mixed up with pieces of other songs, but nobody cared. Sam and Jenny were one state closer to California. I was in Colorado, almost home.

I knew I would get home. Even though, by rights, the car should skid or spin out of control on that icy glare. But I had entered another world and there was a halo around our wheels. God was watching over his runaways fallen from the nest. He wrapped them up in a love, pure to the bone, that speaks no evil. He gave them a love that cuts a clear path with its all night fire. A love that would carry them, high on the wing, out across the plains, over the mountains, to the sea.

By the time I saw the lights of Denver, I had hunkered down in my seat, asking no more questions. I was hurting from cold. Jenny was asleep on Sam's shoulder. They pulled off the road just before the I-25 exit, going north. I reached over and hugged them both with one hug.

"Say hello to that big blue Pacific for me."

"Don't worry none bout that" Sam said. "We're gonna sit on a sunny beach and just roll around in the waves."

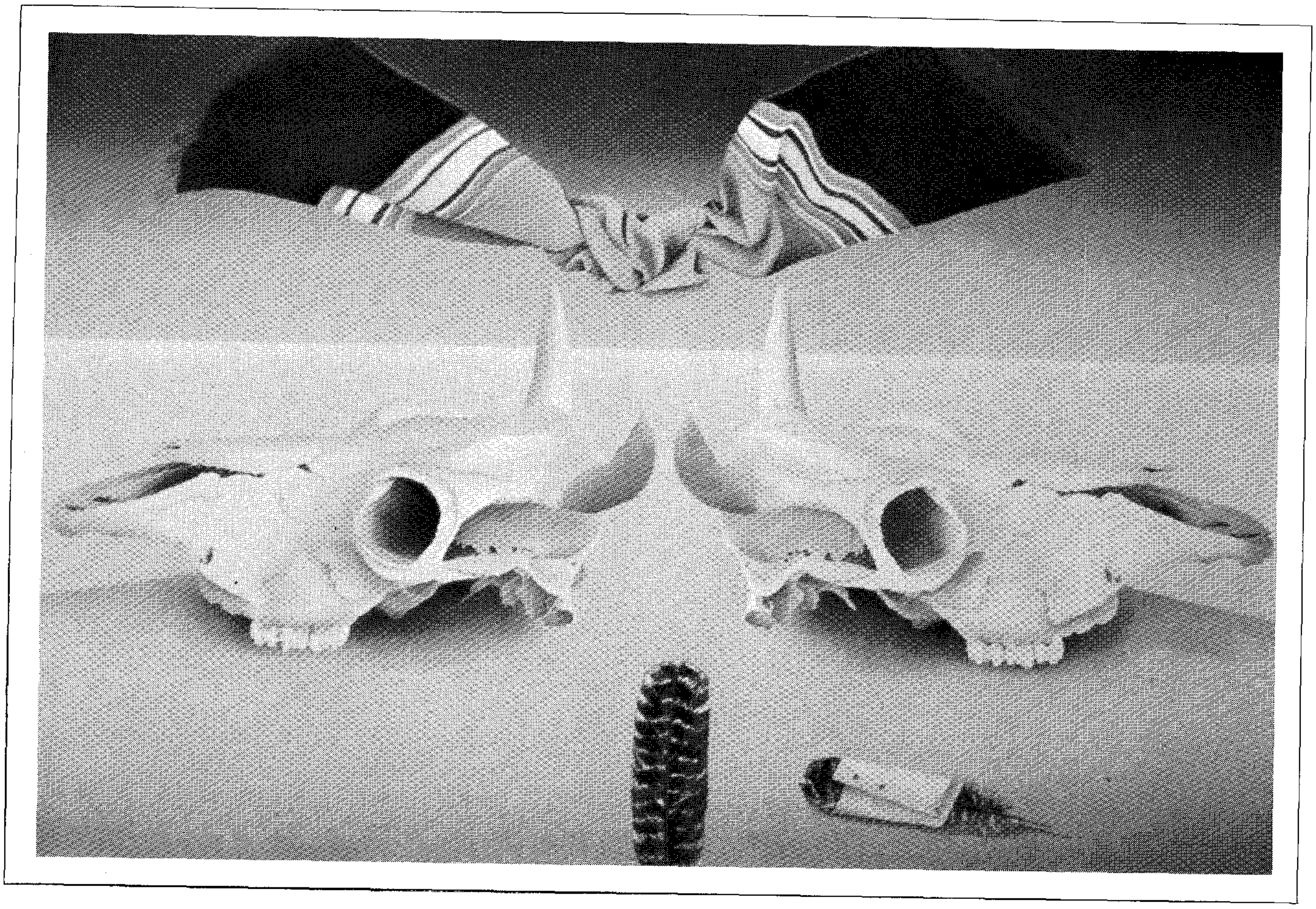
Sam put his arms around Jenny and kissed her on the mouth as I closed the door. I yelled "Happy New Year" as they pulled out. I tried to walk and fell over. I got scared. I crawled in the gravel, kicking my legs out behind me. I dug my boots into the stones. I couldn't feel my toes. They were icebergs, down there, floating without me.

Cars whizzed past. Nobody stopped. They probably thought I'd wandered out of a party with too much to drink and nowhere to go. I stamped my feet. Some feeling jangled up my legs. I limped a first step, hobbled a few more. I started running. Then, I remembered my pack was still in the car. I didn't care. Maybe there was something in there they could use.

I saw a truck stop in the distance. Its lights twinkled on and off. I wished for it to move closer, just one step closer. I wished for Sam and Jenny the Land of Milk and Honey. I wished for lovers everywhere a simple song. A moonshine kiss for the long night. A waking dream of eternal, rocking blue. Nothing but blue for the new year. ☐

ELIZABETH TALLENT

COMINGS AND GOINGS



Two things he knows how to do: read minds and skip stones. He was nearly thirty-four years old before it occurred to him that there might be more than a superficial likeness between these two things.

The problem is, he's leaving me. I have been Joey's lover all this time: I am good at mind-reading improvisations, my cheekbones are high and severe, my legs long enough to look faintly knock-kneed in the obligatory colored tights. Our first days together were spent on the beach, collecting stones. Hold one hand out at arm's length, level with your eyes, the fingers curved. Imagine a stone. The proper stone will fit into the diagonal between the base of your forefinger and the first slight up-curve into the fleshy convexity which is the root of the thumb. It should be cool, as full of internal certainty as an egg. A stone is a personal object; you will know it when you see it. Those first few days, wading through the foam behind him, the bones in my ankles felt cold and oddly delicate. Behind us the waves touched our footprints gently, as if uncertain what to make of them, the long splayed ovals of my toe-prints, the short impacted oblongs of Joey's heels. When I looked behind me again they were gone.

He's in love with a seamstress in Boulder. I imagine that she lives in a dark Victorian house with carefully preserved white gingerbread above the porch; perhaps it is in the historic zone. She is blond, with milk-colored knuckles. There is a narrow space between her two front teeth; she has a curious habit of biting off the ends of stray threads with a sudden fox-like twist of her throat. Her sheets are patterned with clouds. Above the bed, on pages of pale green graph paper stolen from an accounting ledger in the office where she used to work, she has charted her bio-rhythms for the last five months. The three lines on the chart—body, mind, and spirit—rise and fall in chiseled synchrony. Things are looking up: her last lover was bald and played the sitar. He used to perform cross-legged, in a long mustard-colored robe, on the sidewalk in front of her house. Each evening when she walked home from work she would see him—his high forehead gleaming with sweat, the feathery lines of dirt on the soles of his feet, the small round hat he had placed on the sidewalk before him, upside down, the corner of a dollar bill curling above the brim, attentive as a cat's ear. The sight always mysteriously saddened her. As far as she knew he always used the same dollar bill, but Boulder proved fruitful for him. His secret inner pockets thickened and grew musical with coins, the saffron robe billowing like a picnic blanket weighted down with stones. When he left he stole her driver's license and a Mickey Mouse bank she had kept on her dressing table. She drove him to the bus station at midnight; she didn't know then what he had packed in his suitcase, and the sides of her nose were streaked and cold with tears. Mounting the steps of the Greyhound, he turned and kissed the tips of his fingers, lightly, as if by accident. He looked like a stranger to her, in the hat.

All of this, and perhaps everything that follows, is as fragile, as much a product of the clumsy wistfulness of the imagination, as the stone you held a moment ago in the palm of your hand. Joey has always complained of my awkwardness; once I spilled a whole hatful of slips of paper into the snow, in an impromptu performance outside a shopping mall in Butte. The questions people had wanted Joey to answer were written inside the slips, the slips carefully folded. Joey still speaks of this when he is upset. "An irretrievable loss," he calls it. In his opening spiel he introduces me as a princess, perhaps to intimate that this is why the dark-haired, knock-kneed woman is valuable; it is not obvious. He says everything to me twice, implying that I do not really understand English—this, though I was born in Washington, D.C. It is true that my mother has a slight accent, handed down from her mother like a recipe for cake, frugal and foreign. The night I was born my mother watched part of an old Clark Gable movie on television while my father packed her things into their ancient chrome-green Ford. There were five flights of stairs from the street to their apartment, and it was raining. My father is a small, near-sighted man who favors—even now—clerkish gold-rimmed glasses which rest heavily on the bridge of his nose. He saw only fragments of the film: Clark Gable kissing a woman so hard that her blond hair swung backwards, the nape of her neck strangely exposed and impervious; a child running down a dark sidewalk, slipping suddenly into an alley between two buildings. My father has the impression that it was raining in the movie, as well as in the street downstairs.

That was in 1954. My father was working for the government that year, attempting to isolate a toxin found only in a certain species of Mediterranean shellfish. The shellfish were very rare, and the causes of this rarity were mysterious: had they, as a species, simply ceased to adapt in the wake of random harvesting by the fugitive fishing industries that proliferated along the impoverished, sun-struck coast? All of the species' chromosonal attention had been devoted to the engineering of this labyrinthine, delicate toxin; the world of organic chemists had never encountered its like. The shellfish had no energy left over for aesthetic or architectural improvements, and remained plain gray shells on the brink of extinction. There was, furthermore, the possibility that agents of another country were collecting the shellfish, shipping them back to laboratories in the north in insulated cannisters of salt water. For days after their removal from the sea, my father said, the shellfish were still opening and closing according to the rhythm of the tide. He was troubled by these things; he used to keep my mother awake with long accounts of the ethnographic curiosities in the history of the species. The shellfish were first known to have been used by Persian women against the soldiers of Alexander's army. In its effects the toxin is immediate and precise, even in extremely small amounts; everyone knows that there are certain details about which rapists are likely to remain unwary—what they have for supper afterward, for example. My father was as fond of this toxin, as entranced by the feral intricacy of its molecular arrangement, as if he, and not the shellfish, had invented it to preserve his own kind.

My parents, when they finally learned of the mind-reader, were disappointed. There had been, for a time, a law student from Harvard who wore a cream-colored jacket and matching linen tie; he spoke rhapsodically of insurance scams. My mother listened intently as he described the interrogation of one old man who had cashed in on his wife's policy while she was still alive. "How could that have worked?" my mother asked. "Aren't there records, inspections, things like that?"

"With a few good forgeries, a little discreet Xeroxing, you can get away with almost anything," the law student said. "It's frightening, how easily it can be done." Under close questioning the old man had broken down, removed his glasses, and wept. "Of course then it was transparent," the law student said. "The way he took off those spectacles, unwinding them from his head, and then you could see his ears standing out on either side of his skull, so soft and naked. The old man really had magnificent ears—."

In the kitchen my mother took me by the elbow. Through the doorway I could see my father, his hands on his knees, nodding in agreement. He looked like someone being interviewed for a part-time job—scrupulously attentive, prematurely willing to be let down easily. The law student glanced toward me, straightened one cuff, and kept talking. My mother nodded toward his jacket approvingly. She has always liked neutral colors, and once complained of the Picasso fish in the Shedd aquarium that they were "garish." Now she held me by the elbow tensely, as if she intended to steer me. Her fingers were surprisingly strong. On the formica counter there was a tray of water chestnuts, pale as narcissi bulbs, braceleted by strands of bacon. "Did you get these from a magazine?" I asked her. "Darling," my mother said. "He's a very personable young man. Don't you think it's time you learned something about hors d'oeuvres?"

Instead, one evening in the spring, there was Joey. He was working at a small girl's birthday party, and it was nearly dark when I saw him, walking out alone across the lawn. He was barefoot, looking at the lighted tables with a kind of pleased expectancy. In his dark tuxedo—the narrow white breast was nearly luminous against the dusk—he had the anxious stiff-legged walk a deer would have assumed, emerging suddenly from the woods; his head was thrown back slightly, as if he had been badly startled and had not yet recovered. "Watch this," Celia said. Celia is my friend; it was her idea to have a mind-reader at her daughter's party. Iseult is five, and imperious. She danced across the lawn and threw herself at the mind-reader's knees; he seemed to stumble and catch himself all in one movement.

"Iseult's in love," Celia said. She looked at me. "Can you blame her, once you've seen him?" "No," I answered. My fingers pleated the edge of the white paper tablecloth into a small rose-shape as Iseult led the mind-reader toward us. When he was very near he lifted one heel and set it on the table between us, carefully, as if it were an apple. "Do either of you know about things like this?" he asked. His heel was bleeding from a small irregular cut; he lifted his foot away before blood could touch the white paper. "I think there's glass in it," he said. In the emergency room he held his ankle with the same self-absorbed, startled expression while the doctor probed the wound. "Good news," the doctor said. "You're going to live." He held out a small curved shard, weightless and vivid as a petal. In the morning, when Joey walked across the dark hotel room to open the curtains, I was surprised by the grace with which he kept one foot from touching the floor.

My parents came to dinner in the fall, just before Joey left on one of his tours. "We haven't been out of each other's sight for months," he said. "I think being apart will do us some good." My mother had told me over the telephone, quite calmly, that coming to dinner did not constitute an acknowledgement that Joey and I were living together. She knew we were; my father, apparently, did not. I had made mistakes. I had no collander in which to drain the spaghetti. Joey washed the gathered strands in cold water as carefully as if they were a daughter's hair. The apartment was tiny—I had painted one wall of the kitchen Chinese red, and the narrow windows were covered by long bamboo screens. The plates and saucers were dark blue enamel. My father stepped into the kitchen and stood with his back to the wall, holding a handkerchief to his nose. "Your father has a cold," my mother announced for him. The only thing left for us to do was sit down; the kitchen was too small for four people, standing. "You've handled everything so beautifully," my mother said. "Is this actually whole wheat spaghetti?" Joey glanced at me uneasily. Above the kitchen table there was a small drawing a friend of mine had done: a thin child with bony, vulnerable-looking knees and wings. No one could think of anything to say. After a time, leaning toward her attentively, Joey offered to read my mother's mind. "Concentrate on the first thing that comes into your mind," he told her. She stared at him. He was wearing an old t-shirt which showed an antomical drawing of a heart, the separate chambers carefully labeled.

"The first thing that comes into my mind is never *quite* the first thing that comes into my mind," my mother said.

My father cleared his throat softly and began to talk. There had been a perplexing new development in his investigation of bioluminescence, he said. We ate silently for an hour, wine glasses chinking against the blue plates, absorbed in his wistful recital of the inscrutability, the mercurial ploys and subtleties of bioluminescence. It was like listening to a sad, slightly awkward man describe the wrongs a beautiful wife had done. We listened without knowing what bioluminescence was; it turned out to be that thing which makes fireflies light up in the woods.

Joey used to like to rehearse with me. "Imagine you are a small squat woman with a seventeen-room house in the country," he would say. When I closed my eyes I could feel his palm against my forehead, cool and professional. "You are a small squat woman with a seventeen-room house in the country, right?"

"Right."

"Now what do you have in the bedroom?"

"Where in the bedroom? Above the bed?"

"Above the bed."

Against the darkness of my closed eyes I could see the image of an impala's head rising from a polished mahogany plaque. The throat was turned on a slim half-arc, chin slightly down, the long horns nearly touching the wall. It seemed to be staring obliquely at me; the eyes looked oriental, and disillusioned.

"Very good," the mind-reader said.

The seamstress has a small one-eyed cat that walks across the kitchen table when she is gone. Actually it is not even supposed to be her cat; the morning after the sitar player left she found it shut inside a closet. All night long it had made no sound. It has long whiskers, frail as goldfish fins, and it follows her in and out of rooms, brushing the sides of each doorway luxuriously with its thin shoulders. Once when she went to serve supper to Joey there were pawprints on his plate. The sitar player had named the cat "Lotus." Joey calls it "Jane." She herself never thinks of the cat as having a name at all. To encourage Joey throughout this period—she thinks of it as an "awkward transition"—she has taken a different, slightly better-paying job in a sandal factory. The interior of the factory is lunar and brilliantly lit: piles of birch-colored sawdust, yards of silvery aluminum work tables. The seamstress leans above one of the silver counters, punching holes into colored leather. Beside her another woman, supple and stoned, lines the little punched holes with ovals of brass. The stoned woman works slightly faster than the seamstress, which gets them both into trouble. The seamstress punches with a small instrument perfectly designed for punching holes in just that dimension and texture of leather; the sandals that they make are sold in blue boxes inscribed, in darker blue, "For the Natural Foot." Tiny circles of leather collect in a drift by her elbow. Beside her the supple woman leans back, pushes at her sleeves, extracts an elegant joint slender as a thermometer. From the corner of her eye the seamstress watches the smoke, coursing along the surface of the silver table as if it were a stream.

She feels her chakra may be slightly higher than Joey's; she would like a Cuisinart. Often now when they make love she has the feeling that he is not quite satisfied. She sews the stars on his new mind-reading robe into the patterns of real constellations; he doesn't recognize them. He has promised to leave me for her, but already there are problems. In bed one night he tells her a long story: Once he was driving down a dirt road over the plains to a county fair. In the distance he saw a hemisphere of light rising from the ground, plain as the moon, wobbling slightly. He stopped to look at it. All around him there were dark fields, and when he got out of the car he could smell, against the musk of earth and alfalfa, something like distant fire. The hemisphere was gold-veined and brilliant against the otherwise unmarred country night, and as he watched it seemed to flatten and revolve on a hidden axis. He was halfway across one of the fields, running as fast as he could, before he realized it was the Ferris wheel.

We wade in until the water comes up to our knees; we are not holding hands. Near the edge of the woods behind us there is an abandoned tractor—it seems archaic and irritable, as if it had a sense of purpose which it has only briefly relinquished. The steering wheel has a strange elongate primness, and vines have begun to tangle around the narrow tires. The water is clear and very cold. I am surprised by the whiteness of my skin, the length of my legs when seen from above; I float in a small much-patched inner tube, skimming my heels along the surface. Joey swims laps until he is tired, and then stands on the low cement dam at the far end of the swimming hole, parting his wet hair with his fingers, surveying the bottom for a stone. When he finds one he cups it for a moment in both hands, as if to warm it. I float with my back to him. Stones skim along the surface near me, touch, falter, touch down, rise again. Each time a stone touches the water a small circle swells against the stillness. This morning when he came into the bedroom I was sitting up, balancing a saucer on my knees, drinking coffee. "I'm all packed," he told me. "You knew this was coming, didn't you?" A little coffee spilled on the bedspread. I traced the stain over and over, as if I were supposed to memorize it. He came back into the room and stood in the doorway, staring down at me. "Don't look so shocked," he said. "Let's go to the swimming hole." The clouds which are reflected in the surface of the swimming hole are motionless, high and distant. It is hard to tell how often a stone will touch the water before it sinks.

What I think about later, sitting in the sand with my arms around my knees, is this: The wind in Butte came around the cars in the parking lots, some of them still with snow on their windshields, and it hit you in the face. Everyone stood with their backs to it, except Joey and me. I was shivering; there was the wind, and there was an argument Joey and I had had, earlier. That day my stockings were green, with a red patch over one of the knees. The people were mostly middle-aged men and women in ragged parkas and scarves, little kids in bulky down jackets and black rubber boots. I held the hat before me carefully while they tucked in their slips of folded paper. Their knuckles were red from the brief moments that they had been exposed, writing. When I tripped and spilled the hat, the slips of paper tilted through the wind into a bank of snow, skimmed its surface, disappearing into puddles, between the feet of people in the crowd. Behind me, Joey cried out. No one in the crowd looked angry, only amazed. They'd never expected their questions to blow away like that. ☐

WILLIAM OLSEN

MULES IN A FIELD

When Beethoven finished the Fifteenth Quartet
a leaf dropped on the sill,
the air done kissing it.

The notes on the pages

settled like birds into an easy sleep
on an autumn evening in Gneixendorf

where his grown-up nephew
finished beating a wool rug,

a cloud of dust slowing down

long before it settles. Carriage dust
sparkling on Bonn's high bay windows.

Beethoven didn't know his nephew was
sorting through his pant pockets
before throwing them over the taboret

and slumping into a sleep

that somehow touches the leaves.
Sleepy, he let his nephew go deeper,

an elbow on the ivory keys.

"Gneixendorf. The name sounds,"

he said out loud,
"like the breaking of an axle-tree."

He couldn't have heard it, or seen
his surprise, face at the window—

mules in a field, open-mouthed.
Their braying, unheard, was free,

so he could think how as a child

he was told the forest leaves
fell more quickly moonless nights,

even more so after his father and he
had emptied the forest for home, bed,

falling then, now,
always more easily.

SHARYN NOVEMBER

SEASHELLS

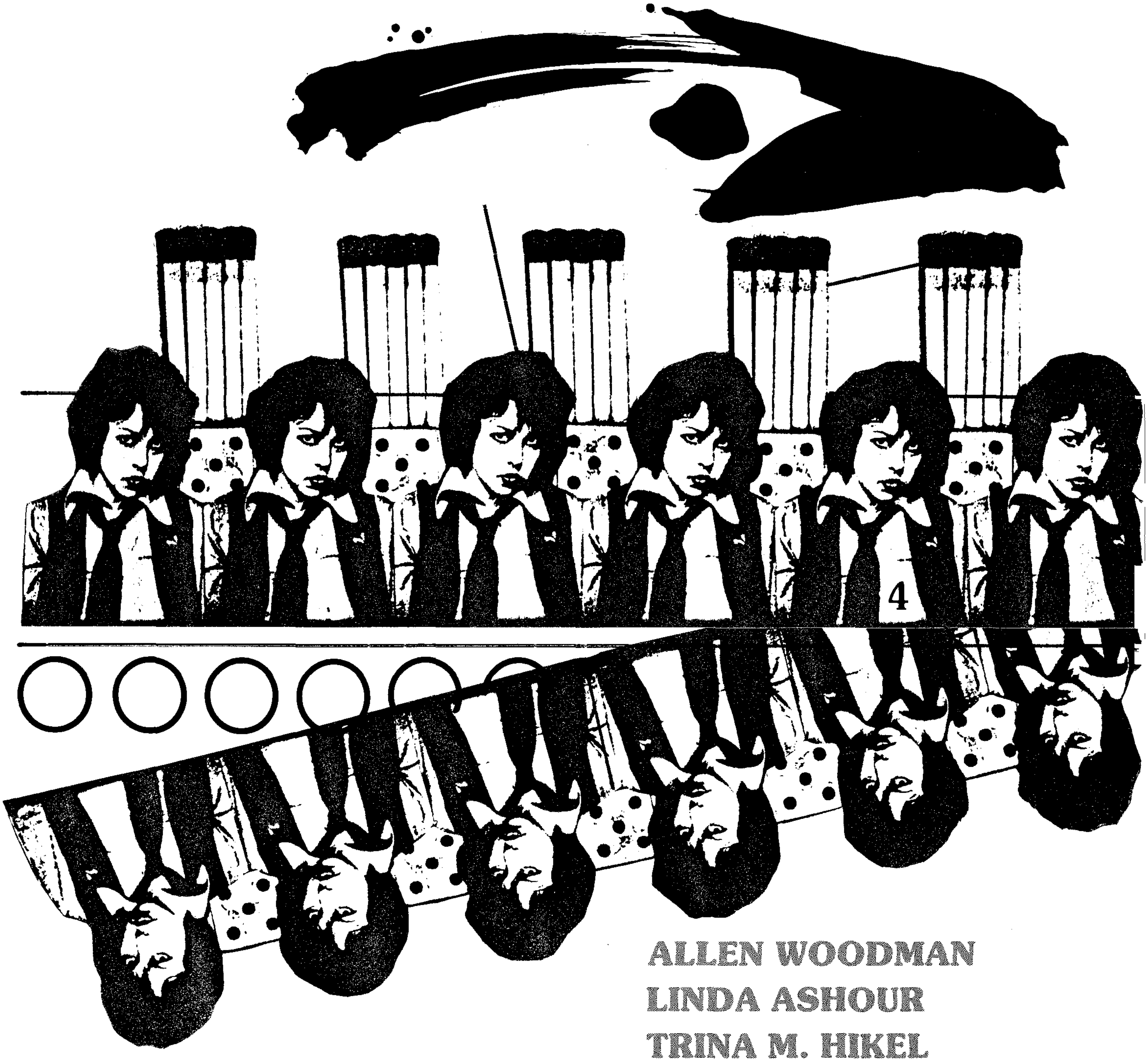
Draping the shell-map like squid, continents
exude their ocean provinces. Purple
belts the fat Equator; Antarctica's a frozen
borealis. Lit from within on its metal axis
the globe's shell is mapped by shells.

Tunneling the Indo-Pacific
below spread islands, Jonah ran into
a mobile bazaar. Imagine his whale, mouth raking
all manner of useful things: Cup-and-Saucer, Tent, a Telescope
to sight exits. Mornings, a Colorful Moon
on a rising tide of salt water.
As he equipped the hollow whale
did he watch for a signal, Spiral Babylon?

It came imbedded in a tidal wall.
Jonah grasped a creature
worn into mirror, its life spent
stressed down. The face reflected was barely his—
some message beyond
the time he'd spent alone
held the hard surface. He moved away.
But light picked out companions, feet pushing from
his names—Bleeding Tooth, Knobbed Helmet,
seeming to rise as they passed.

Descending then, Jonah left
what colonizes the beach, almost human, what
comforts the ear with its echo—not
actual ocean, but one we imagine we live by
where bivalves fan still water
with their false wings.

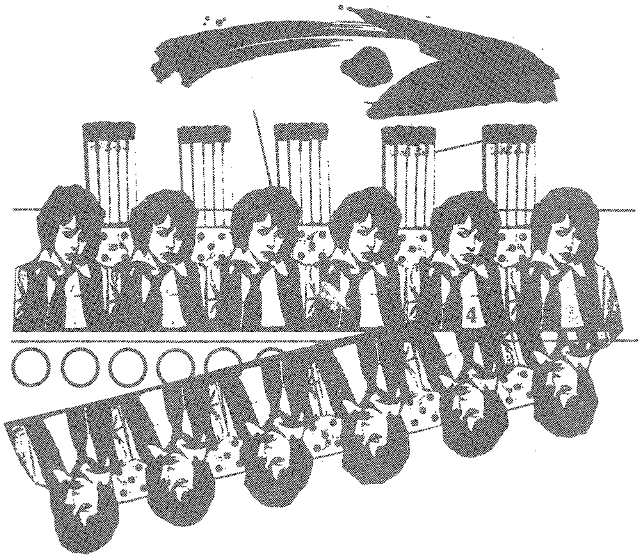
THE 4-MINUTE STORY FOREVER



ALLEN WOODMAN
LINDA ASHOUR
TRINA M. HIKEL
JONATHAN GRIFFITH
KATHERINE PHEIFER
MARK HALLIDAY
MARY PETERSON
SANDRA J. KOLANKIEWICZ
KEITH VEIZER
MAXINE CHERNOFF
C.P. FULLINGTON
ELLEN HAVRE WEIS

JONATHAN GRIFFITH

TWO STORIES



1. DISTANCES

All her life she believed in letting people go. It wasn't done for sorrow's sake though she had enough of that, her human share in fact, and expected to see more. Letting go was, she believed, all she could do. Once gone, they were gone, and there was no way to stop them; no distance like the space between two people tearing apart.

Nor was she used to it, the leavings in her life; and that's what they were, leavings, twenty years of sharing a bed, and then he was gone. Even when she knew he'd be going, she took him over and over into herself, not gently but as if to show him her presence, that she hadn't drifted into him for nothing; as if to tell him, go on, you may forget us, but you won't forget this.

And when he left, she had had twenty years of him and was thankful she was through. It was as if he'd been working all that time to hollow a space in her, the way a wind does shaping a rock shelf into a bowl.

He's written, Mama. You want to see the letter?

I don't want him. I had him.

He didn't say for you not to write.

Twenty years. That's enough.

The letters arrived postmarked from a town a hundred miles away. She dreamed of him whenever they came, the way he was early on, his first job, a carpenter, and he rode to work each morning in the back of the foreman's truck. Evenings, she eased the pain from him, squeezed it out with her fingers and arms.

You sure, Mama? What if he was sick, wouldn't you want to know?

That's his business. People should make choices, not slide back and forth. It isn't dignified all this whining and crawling, holding axes over each other's head.

He wants to visit, Mama, but he wants you to ask him.

Sorry.

What do you want from him? Do you know what you want?

I want people to be sure.

Of what, Mama?

Whether they're coming or going. Staying or been.

Her daughter even looked like him, eyes running ahead like a deer.

I asked him. I told him you said it was all right.

She got up early the day he was to come. She fixed a bed in the spare room and cleaned a space in the closet for his clothes. The wallpaper was waterstained, and the room looked cramped. She felt ashamed she hadn't kept the place better, then suddenly didn't care. He was coming without permission, even if it was her daughter's trick. She had gotten along fine without him, learned in fact what it meant to be alive.

Don't argue with him, Mama.

We both argued. It was both our faults.

Well, don't you start it then.

When the car pulled up, it was the first she had seen of him for over a year. She expected him to look the same as she remembered, rough skin and white flanks. He'd grown heavier though, his hair thinned so much it blew in wisps. Watching him, she felt suddenly triumphant that she was the one who had survived the years best. She let him in, and they stared at each other through hollowed eyes.

What do you want from me? he said finally.

She waited for the answer, and it seemed to rise from the place between the beating of her heart. ☐

2. UP NORTH

He never really knew his grandfather. The few times he saw him he was too young to remember much, mostly the way his grandfather looked, the solid body and the balding head. He'd heard stories enough, and these were what made up his memories, the story of the deer or the one of the old man nearly freezing to death. In his mind, he was certain he could remember his grandfather standing over the carcass though it had happened way before the boy was born. His father said the buck was so large the old man had to pull it into bushes, then walk several miles to get his truck.

"You see, someone else had wounded it and didn't finish it off. Your grandfather tracked it, finally found it crouched in some trees. The buck must have known it was over because this time it didn't run. It just stood up and stared at Dad before he shot. He hated killing it, don't you see?" his father continued while the boy imagined the wide round eyes. "But he had to. It would have been cruel to leave the buck out there to get finished by dogs. I want you to understand this because these will be the choices in your life; it was better for the buck that way, a surety at least, quick and good."

His grandfather was first a lumberjack, and then a guide for hunters when the paper mill died. He'd grown up in the North and was used to the cold. He knew the forests and rivers and could get along with everyone which his father called a dangerous trait.

"They want you to drink with them," his father continued. And he told of the fishing parties and how the boy's grandfather had to hold his alcohol better than the rest. He was the only one who knew the river, at which shoot to take a rapids and where to avoid the snags. He drank as much as the others, and then it went beyond what even he knew.

"I found him drunk once and nearly frozen, and I knew I couldn't help. I was sixteen, and he was going to kill himself, one way or the other. It just took him awhile."

The day they buried his grandfather they had to clear a path through the snow. The casket was kept closed for the mourners who stood around stamping their feet. The boy didn't understand what was sad about the funeral, but he knew it was. It became a sadness he always associated with northland winters when the snow would drift to window ledges and the temperature would plunge. It was the same sadness he felt when people gathered to tell stories, and the best made them laugh. He had enough of his grandfather in him that he could forgive for the hurt. It was his father he could not forgive, for becoming just like the old man, trading the sadness for all those lies. ☐

KATHERINE PHEIFER

THE NURSE

I sour the wind with urine and blood from my uniform, from the home. I hurry home, sweet home, to blend with the smells of the roast, the red carnations on the table where my daughter sits.

—You're over-tired. Your face sags. You should quit, mother.

The oven timer rings. Old people wait for lunch, for pills, for death. And then one dies, but another comes. I can't catch up. When young, my daughter asked the butcher, where does it all come from? There's always meat. Now that she knows, she will not eat with me.

—If you saw the slaughterhouse, mother, do you think you could eat meat, mother, could you, mother?

I open the oven door. My glasses steam, water runs on them.

—It sustains me.

Like Clara Brown murmuring in her bed, momma, momma, momma. She would momma all night, but I give her pills. She sleeps fitfully, still whispering, momma. I bring a syringe. A drop of blood seeps from the hole as I remove it. I take the thermometer from the roast, sop the juices with bread.

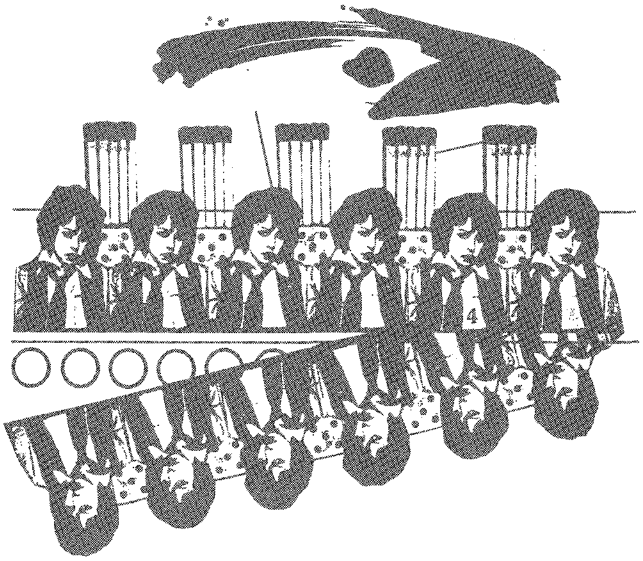
—You've become hard. That job will make you a bitter old woman tending carnations.

—Pearl's collapsed rectum falls from her anus like a red carnation. She takes it in her hand, stuffs it back.

My daughter rises.

—I'll kill myself before I get like those people.

I watch her leave, night come. The air is heavy with dried blood, dirty dishes. I will leave them. They will be waiting for me tomorrow. They will lull me to sleep. ☐



MARK HALLIDAY

ALAN AND ARNOLD

June 1963

In a few days Alan and Arnold will graduate from junior high school. During their ninth-grade year they have developed a loquacious friendship. Both boys are shy with girls and smaller than the school's athletes, hesitant and awkward at dances and sports. In the cafeteria and walking home from school they discuss the biggest things, life and death, time and fate, love and ethics. Their conversations are fueled chiefly by Arnold's knowledge and Alan's imagination. Both boys are conscious of this division of gifts and both are willing to make the difference between them seem more absolute than it is. Arnold has already read at least a hundred books whose titles Alan has noted anxiously in libraries and bookstores. Alan has won some notoriety at the junior high for his satirical vignettes about teachers and students. Arnold enjoys Alan's flights of fancy and counts on them to animate each conversation. Alan, proud of his flair for whimsy, is content to bask in Arnold's admiration, while expressing awe and envy of Arnold's precocious erudition. So they play their parts: the dreamer and the philosopher, the writer and the reader.

Tonight they arrive at Anita Schiffler's party together, driven by Alan's father. Anita's parents are wealthy. Their house stretches along the top of a small hill surrounded by rolling lawns and a screen of forest encircling the lawns.

There are more than forty guests at the party when Alan and Arnold arrive, and more are expected. The two friends are quickly alarmed. They only know a third of the guests. Many are older, some are even so awesomely mature as to be within a few days of graduation from Sipples High School. Remarks made by several of the older boys indicate that they *drove* to the party *in their own cars.* This is frightening—if there is one thing guaranteed to win a girl's approval, Alan knows, it is the ability to drive to a party in one's own car. Arnold probably knows this too but is less conscious of such matters, being more resigned than Alan to the fact that love and sex will not transform their lives for a few more years, at least.

Alan and Arnold help themselves to cheese and crackers. Their alarm does not fade as they observe that white wine is available. Wine! Anita is only in ninth grade yet her parents allow wine to be served at her party. Alcohol in any form is a token of adulthood, or pretended adulthood. Alan and Arnold, sensing inevitable defeat, have made it a policy to refrain from competition in the game of pretending adulthood. Their response to this pretense (which they detect in almost all activities of their peers) has matured from timid withdrawal to sullen abstention to defiance—though their defiance seldom manages to become publicly noticeable.

They see Anita chatting with Jack Kempley, who wears an expensive blue sportcoat and a scarlet tie and who has been described as "one of the fastest playboys at Sipples." Kempley is lighting Anita's cigarette. Cigarettes: another token.

"Why are we here?" Arnold mutters. He wants a serious answer.

Alan prefers to joke, gaining time in which to figure out his own attitude. "We want to get married, and the room is filled with eligible divorcées."

"I'm a confirmed bachelor, myself," says Arnold without smiling.

Alan rapidly eats three pieces of cheddar and drinks half a glass of ginger ale. He says, "I feel about as welcome as Mickey Mantle in a hockey rink."

Arnold doesn't reply, but Alan sees he is listening. "I feel about as well-located as George Washington crossing the Danube," Alan offers.

"Or John Howard Griffin crossing the color line."

"Who?"

"I'll tell you later," says Arnold.

"I feel about as local as Huck Finn on Wall Street."

"All right, that's enough," Arnold says flatly. "Let's get out of here."

They pass through sliding screen doors onto a patio. Terry spots them and calls out, "You guys aren't leaving already are you?"

Alan turns and notes that Terry has one arm curled as-if-casually around Joyce's waist. "We're going to play a few holes of golf," Alan says. "Then maybe we'll buy a Jaguar and drive back here."

"Okay, Alan," Terry laughs. Alan and Arnold move down across the dark grass of the back lawn toward a group of maple trees. They can both feel Terry smiling at their backs; he will make some remark to Joyce or Suzie about how weird "the straight A's" are—eggheads.

Leaning against the maples Alan and Arnold ease into a discussion. Both are wondering how candid they want to be about their dislike for the party, their resentment of Jack Kempley and similar Social Successes. They gaze up across the lawn at the bright lights of the long house. Seeing that no lights are on in several upstairs rooms, Alan imagines that boys only a year or two older than he are at this moment exploring untold realms of delight with the loveliest girls of the ninth grade.

"Have you read any James Baldwin?" Arnold asks.

Alan is startled to find that Arnold is even now thinking about books. "Who is James Baldwin?"

Arnold waits a minute before answering, as if to indicate that there are several complicated ways of answering the question. "A writer. He's black."

"I don't think I've heard the name."

"Every single one of these people at this party has white skin," says Arnold.

"I guess that's right. But some of them have managed to acquire fabulous tans." Alan thinks of the most impressive girls, who spend a lot of time at the beach.

"James Baldwin is a man who makes you wonder why there are fifty people here, all of the same race, when more than ten percent of the American population is black."

"A smart Negro wouldn't come to this party if he was invited," says Alan, intending a joke. He realizes this is not a good time for humor because Arnold turns away and falls silent. For five minutes Alan respects the silence. Then he says, "Let's explore the estate."

Arnold shrugs. Alan starts to move, and Arnold slowly follows. They begin to walk silently along the outer edge of the moonlit lawn, in the shadows of the trees. Seven minutes later they have completely circled the house and they pause at the group of maples.

"That's one lap," says Alan. He wonders if they will go back into the house for more snacks, maybe some rum-flavored cake.

"Let's do twenty," says Arnold. His tone is almost grim.

By the time they are finishing their fifteenth circumnavigation of the Schiffler estate they have attracted considerable attention among the partygoers, particularly those most bored and those most anxious for something to talk about. A group of eight or ten gathers on the patio and hails them each time they pass. Alan and Arnold, by unspoken agreement, refuse to acknowledge the boisterous audience in any way. But they do increase their pace so that they circle the house every four minutes, and their acceleration makes their mysterious travel appear strangely purposeful to the loud onlookers up at the house. Those who feel most unpurposeful in their revelry (or simulated revelry) are most intrigued by these two silent walkers out there at the edge of darkness.

Alan grins at Arnold. This is starting to be fun. Arnold allows himself a tight smile. Discipline, he seems to be saying, discipline—the success of their mission will depend on the steadfastness of their dedication to this silent repetitive journey. After the twentieth lap Alan whispers: "What is our goal now, Captain? Thirty? Forty?"

"Just to *be* here," says Arnold. "Out here in the dark."

Some of the partygoers decide that the walkers' challenge—if it is a challenge—must be met. They move out to the edge of the lawn below the patio and form what is either a greeting party or a roadblock. When Alan and Arnold come into view they are hit with a barrage of mocking salutations. Alan is excited and scared. Some of those boys are big and powerful—they might try to interrupt the walking by force. Arnold remains utterly silent and does not slow down. Alan stays in step.

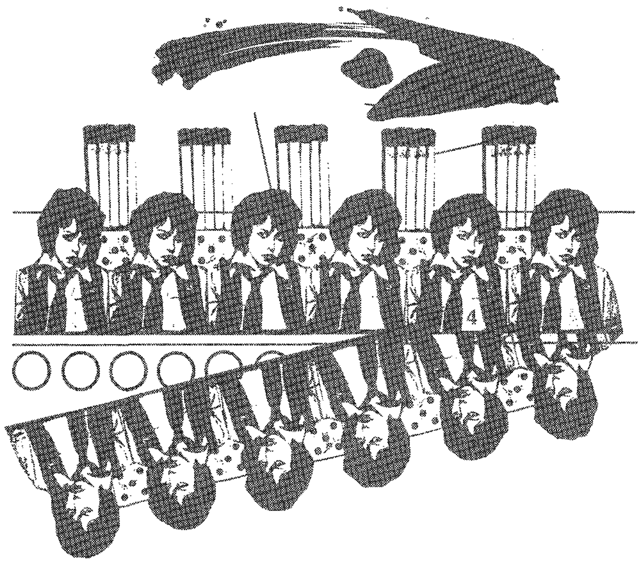
When they are within twenty feet of the assemblage and it is clear they don't intend to stop or even pause, several angry voices rise: "What are you guys, zombies?" "How can they be the straight A's if they walk in circles?" "You'll never make the Olympics at that speed!" "Some people really know how to waste time!" Other voices (including Terry's) are just curious: "Why don't you guys take a rest?" "Are you trying to make some kind of a statement?"

Jack Kempley, or someone like him, grabs Arnold's shoulder. Arnold twists free and says in the sudden silence: "No more water, the fire next time." Then before the assemblage reacts he leads Alan through it and they go on walking, ignoring the cascade of derision thrown after them. When they reach the other side of the house Alan asks Arnold what he meant about the fire next time.

"I don't know. It was just a quote," Arnold says.

They smile at each other in the dark. This, they know, is a triumph they will remember. They have made themselves more interesting than the party. They do a few more tours around the house, then Alan phones his father for a ride home. □

MARY PETERSON
PINBALL



I've kept the same schedule for the last three years I've taught at the University; that is, leaving a hole of at least an hour open in the afternoon so I can go to the Union basement for a cup of coffee. I don't love teaching any more, and if I didn't get away I'm not sure I could do it at all. I enter the Union building from the backside which is lower than the front; adjust my eyes to the change of light. The hallway seems never to have been cleaned and the squares of brown and tan tile are smeared, as though at night somebody pushed dirty water around on them and left it to dry. Every few feet there's another big corkboard on which are pinned notices for rock concerts and freshman mixers and campus hot lines and the Film Series. When you're a student, the options are limitless, or they seem to be. Some of the posters have cards attached to them in a sheaf. In the corner of one bulletin board there's a colorful notice with subscription cards offering cut rates on major national magazines. The world is waiting to give you its information in newsweeklies, its considered opinion in thoughtful journals, how to dress in glamorous color photographs. All these things are possibilities, choices to make, tickets for membership.

The coffee machines are inside the Game Room. There are round formica tables and red plastic chairs with narrow tippy metal legs, and the tables are ashy and marked with round dried stains—folded cigarette packages, scraps of paper, napkins stuffed into styrofoam cups. Fluorescent lights make it look like a diner after midnight. In the middle are the pool tables, and along one wall a row of pinball machines. I've usually kept the hole in my day at about two or three o'clock, and almost always the kid is there playing pinball.

Probably he's been there playing for at least a year and a half—though it could be longer. He's a short kid with shaggy brown hair and a smooth face and quick, intelligent eyes behind horn-rimmed glasses, and he wears faded jeans with a tight seat, and usually a plaid flannel shirt. He plays pinball like it matters. His shoulders are very square; his face is stern and his eyes have a need in them that I remember from when I was younger, when you thought you could have anything if you wanted it enough. By the time I reached college, that need and feeling were like a hard, focused light. In college, desire was all mixed up, and it wasn't just for myself that I wanted things: it was for the whole world.

It took a few times of seeing him for me to learn this about him. I had to go to the coffee machine and push one button for black and the other one for extra cream, and hear the bells of the pinball machine going. I had to pay attention. Seeing his face made me know it. He looks like somebody's kid brother except when he's really playing; then he looks like a lover.

I sit and drink my scummy coffee and watch the kid, who doesn't seem to know I'm there. He tilts his head up sometimes to see the colored lights totaling up the score, and the little silver balls whiz around, and his hands are on the buttons that make the flippers work. When he thinks he has a good set-up, he moves his shoulders and presses the flippers harder—as if it could do any good—and the ball pings as it makes another point before it finally hits the fatal groove at the bottom of the machine. It's important to work fast, and he pulls the lever and sends another ball up so the machine is making noises like New Year's, and at the end he's won a free game. He usually wins at least one free game, though he still must spend five bucks an afternoon playing. Somebody's got money somewhere, I think, but then I wonder: he often plays with other kids who stake him. They might play with him because he cares so much about pinball. The other kids have books with them; he never does. I watch him and sip my coffee which tastes bitter and like something burned, the edge of the damned plastic chair cutting into my legs.

One time his hand was bandaged up over the knuckles and around one finger, and I wondered if he'd had a fight over pinball. He's a small kid and he'd lose a fight. The finger wasn't the index, which he needs to press the button for the flippers. In the '60s, when I was a student, nobody had much time for pinball. My professors talked about humanism and authenticity and changing the world, and those were the days when everybody was shocked. Walter Cronkite was shocked when Mayor Daley's police beat demonstrators and newsmen on the head in Chicago in 1968, and everybody was shocked over napalm-burned children on dirt roads in Vietnam, and the Rolling Stones played shocking music, and Janis Joplin and Jimmy Hendrix were outrageous and died shockingly. I remember standing in a packed West Bank bar and the speakers were blaring druggy music—Grace Slick, "Don't You Want Somebody To Love?"; the Beatles, "A Day In The Life"—and the energy was enough to get you high without taking anything. People were injured then with real injuries, from nightsticks and mace and not fights over pinball. The bar was like a command post in a war zone. People sat at tables plotting actions against Honeywell. People painted peace signs on telephone poles, for God's sake. We were able to be shocked and we were able to believe that we could change the world. We even kept believing it for a few years afterward.

Theatre tickets on the bureau, two-year old yellowing shirts, old philosophy books from college, my address book with the names of people who moved away a long time ago, a stack of term papers to read before Thursday. Sometimes I pick up the phone and call a friend in Cambridge; I go for a walk, stop to have coffee downtown, read the *Times*, talk about budget cuts and the new administration with my colleagues.

We are all doing it, I think—letting the subscription run out. Sometimes I put Dylan on the tape deck, drive along singing too loud: twenty years of schooling and they put you on the day shift; how does it feel to be on your own? Wheat germ and honey in the morning, a package of herb tea; at night, stir-fry vegetables and tamari, the evening news. I stand on the back porch, where the wild mint grows up high beside the lattice, as the rain starts. Feel the air as the front moves in.

Sometimes I wish the kid at the pinball machine would turn around and smile at me, at least once, so he'd know that I get it. But he's never done that. Still, one time, if he's lucky enough, if his timing is right, if he plays his chances skillfully, and if there's nobody around that he cares about impressing, he'll win one free game after another—and I want to be there for it. The lights will go up yellow and red and blue and white, and the pinging sound will be as crisp and accurate as Beethoven by Toscanini, and he'll make it, he really will. Like what? Like when you're on the ferris wheel the first time, and you're sure at the top that your car is going to break free and keep going off toward the lovely moon. Like before you know it can't, it can't ever. ☐

ALLEN WOODMAN

FATHERS

At one time he worked in a small, sad barber shop all alone. It was not far from where my mother and I lived. When I needed a haircut, she would send me to him.

The only things personal about the shop were an old circus poster, and his smell which remained on his clothes after he was dead and made me cry as much as the knowledge that I would soon forget him.

My father would put a hand on either side of my head and turn me for a better look. Then he'd bring his head down next to mine, and we'd look in the mirror together, his hands still framing my face. I'd look at myself, and he'd look too, but he'd never comment on what he saw. He'd just run his fingers slowly through my hair, as if thinking about something else.

There was nothing to do with me after the haircut, except go over to the Kottage Restaurant for their vegetables. They were fresh, and you could get three with any dinner. My father said he brought my mother there once, but they gave her an eating utensil that wasn't too clean.

Amidst the sprinkles of sugar crystals on the table cloth and the salt and pepper shakers that didn't match, my father would tell me his father's story. "My father," he would say, "was a great man. Short and bald, but still a champion gymnast. They would launch him out of the circus cannon with a puff of smoke 60 feet through the air, and always he was caught safely. From the net he would leap to his feet to stand for the ovation of the crowd.

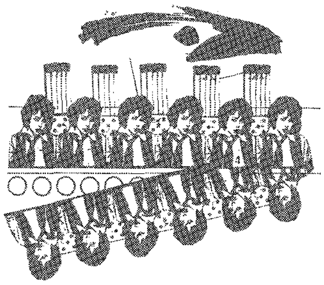
"How he did it not even I knew. Maybe it was a giant coiled spring and a huge firecracker? My mother wouldn't let him show me how. She wanted me to have a real career." My father stirred his coffee, the teaspoon sounded like a bell clapper. He smiled at his own foolishness.

"Once he let me climb atop his cannon," my father continued, gesturing with the pepper shaker. "But he never ever let me slip down the barrel."

We would walk to the cashier and wait for the waitress to come forward to tell the cashier what we had bought. The waitress wore a black shiny apron over a dingy white nylon dress. I wouldn't look at her, but I knew what she looked like anyway.

Then my father would say, "Well, do you want me to finish barbering your hair?" and he would take me back and sit me in his chair. He would clip the ends of a few hairs with scissors, simply to keep me from leaving him. And I would look at the circus poster and think about his father, and how my father's story of his father was like music you want to make yourself hear inside only and nowhere else.

Finally, before I had to go, he would take a bottle of hard candy out of a half empty drawer and offer me some. It was sad, the taste of the candy and the way the candy stuck together. ☐



LINDA ASHOUR

TRAVELING ALONE

She can't carry a child. She gets pregnant as easily as some people catch colds, but nearly always loses the fetus in the sixth or seventh week. Once she carried a baby through the second month. She was in a restaurant with her husband having a second glass of mineral water. They waited for a good fish soup they had read about in a magazine. She excused herself and when she got back from the bathroom she said to her husband, It's dead. Order me a J&B on the rocks.

She is a great packrat and keeps all her old textbooks and term papers. There is a physiology book packed away in the attic. She stares at pictures of the reproductive system, knowing they're a lie. Inside Dana is empty as a polished shelf. One move and its contents slide off, shattering into a million pieces. Whenever she is examined, she expects the doctor to stand up with amazement and fear saying, "My God, Mrs. Besher, there's nothing in there."

There has been a smorgasbord of specialists. More than one has told her to remain in bed. She spent several weeks with a remote control and a housekeeper named Ernie, until she emptied out to the crashing sounds of "Let's Make a Deal." There wasn't any pain. There is never any pain until she gets to the doctor afterward. Once, a friend suggested a Dr. Allen. Young, a comer in the field, she had heard. Dr. Allen told her she was not built for childbearing. She could keep up the cycle if she wanted but it would never bear fruit. He had seen so many like her. Did she have some goal for herself aside from this? The doctor was small and finely-built. She thought he probably chose this business of doctoring women because he could reach all the way inside her without making her flinch. She wondered if he was small all over and laughed incongruously at his question.

She takes blond, unfinished furniture and makes it acceptable to the same people who collect Mexican baskets. She works over it with an icepick and rough sandpaper. Then she paints animals and flowers on it, humans if they're commissioned. The retailers all assume South America inspires her designs. She was only out of the country once, to Canada for fishing. If she sees a dog it's usually like that . . . a short torso with a stump of tail. When she puts her designs on a mottled surface, you can't tell she doesn't paint well.

They go to lots of parties. Women like her husband because he lets them laugh at scatalogical jokes without feeling guilty. He never says "I shouldn't tell you this, but . . ." Instead he says "Got a joke for you, Diane," just like that. She goes to the parties and ferries cocktail snacks to the children of the hostess, like a Rebel moving through Yankee lines. They tell her who they dislike and what they would most like to own. In return she squats, small as a jockey, in the shadow of their nitelites, feeding them nuts and salted crackers until they tell themselves to sleep with their own tales. They ask their mothers before the party if Mrs. Besher will come. If they answer yes, they make sour faces to throw them off the trail.

He lives inside the obsession. He saw a painting once, a black mural by Mark Rothko. Inside the black, maybe it was just his own eyes creating color out of need, he saw purples and reds that moved across the canvas in a blur. He thought, That is how it is, and went home. He is swift and deft and moves about inside her because certain things are contractual. He went to the University of Oklahoma and never misses the annual football game with Arkansas. He doesn't enjoy the games but the university years were his best and he goes each year in the same blazer and white shirt. She draws posters of pigs on a spit or pigs being punted through the air by a big boot. He waves the poster and shouts along with thousands of others.

Her family used to pick cherries at a produce ranch outside of Bakersfield. When the fruit came into season the rancher charged a fixed price per head, kids under four free. They moved over the field for two hours or more, filling buckets that would go into preserves. Her mother stood up slowly once, as if her arms were weighted, and rubbed the small of her back. Her hands were stained red by the berries and it looked as if they were a stranger's hands, attached at the wrist. Dana's father said She's gotten real churchy since you've been up at school. Buying into Jesus with that damn guild. Her mother helped donate the priest's stole. It was collaborative. She did the border design and the other women did the tucking. Her mother was the youngest member to serve on the guild. Her presence was encouraging, a sign of God's continuing influence. Dana still goes to church because it is the last elegant thing on earth. Also, the smell of newsprint makes her ill and her husband sits in the middle of the New York Times, sullen and unwashed, for most of the morning.

Did you think this would be easy, Sweetheart? The diving instructor, hopped up on a combination of two pills, held the needle-waists of his small charges on the high board. The mothers thought love of competition gave the girls the courage. Either the dream of a blue ribbon or the sparkling eyes of Barry Ernest. He could push you off the board and make it look like you did it, so they stopped breathing for the necessary moments and jumped into the air that was safer than him. No one had breasts yet. Laura Nathan finally blew the whistle. The board bit into her back in a cutaway, the water turning rusty where she landed. Someone could have died, they all turned on the chairman of the board of directors who immediately resigned. Not one girl who took a diving lesson that summer ever speaks before an audience or sleeps with a stranger without thinking, Did you think this would be easy.

She drives the highway badly. She doesn't like traveling alone, yet when she is inside a caravan of cars the pace doesn't suit her. An old Laura Nyro tune plays on the radio. LET THE WIND BLOW TIMER. When she was in school, it was as if the singer lived in the dormitory. No matter whose room you entered she was always on the record player. Dana wonders, fiddling with the treble, if a single impasse can stretch out over a whole life without cracking on a fault line. She thought, years ago, it would always be that way: an impossible medley of notes and a yellow cat weaving hard figure-eights between her ankles. When Nyro released "New York Tendaberry" her friends shook their heads and declared majors in economics or political science. The cat was knocked into a gully by a car full of high school kids. If you touched its haunches after that, it chased its own tail in fast, mad circles. □

TRINA M. HIKEL

FIGHT

man & woman in the ring 16-oz. gloves fifteen rounds
from behind her eyes: helmet straps sweat hair tendrils
upper lip distended from guard   grease sweat perfume
a candy wrapper on the edge of the ring in her corner
slouching on her stool she kicks it off
it returns

she is short sturdy lithe dark   a lot smaller   he
is tall lean pale with big straight white teeth

gritted in a mean grin he hisses sneers makes low remarks
his eyes glitter he seethes contempt dances all around her and
hits her hits her hard enough to stun her a lot of times
all head shots no body hits

she guards her body and keeps her head down at first so
she can see what he does she is surprised at the strength
of his initial blows he is quick and fancy and all around her
she is good at keeping herself away from his tough cuts
she looks like she's taking more punishment than she really is
she's moving slowly passive defensive

his rage is moving him and he's breathing hard she sees
he's a lot older than he first looked she gets in a hard left jab
to the shoulder then socks a cut to his jaw and the bell rings
and he can go back to his corner for a minute and stop
trying to smile

she gobbles a hershey bar and a handful of vitamin c's and
they're back on their feet

the back of her is soaking wet and she feels like she's
exhaling spray   no blood   he hasn't yet gone for her face
her head is pounding he's springing around her muttering
viciousness through his teeth slogging punches to her rib cage

she heads into a clinch the ref pulls them apart and he gets
a good one to her solar and a couple little knocks to her face
she clinches again and gives him a slow sliding knuckle punch
to the pancreas   the ref yanks them apart again holding her
a little too long with her middle unguarded so he can hit her

this goes on several more rounds

the bell rings again by now she's got his number she
staggers back to her corner squints at him he's leaning back
easily looking like he's there for a beauty treatment her
eyelids are grotesque still no blood her seconds give her
a dirty wet towel to suck on and only pretend to fan her off
the cloth they wipe her eyes with is full of liniment

back on her feet she doesn't move too far from her corner lets
him do the traveling her arms aren't yet taxed and her legs
are good his big long arms are wearying and his dance step isn't
as high even his crouch has weakened he's standing a little
too straight   she wallops him twice on the chin he springs back
and then pastes her face but the fight is beginning to change
the crowd is getting excited

he is heaving and panting his face which was red is now pasty white
her cheeks are blooming she smashes him again and again he reels
back the crowd roars he lashes out to her mouth

blood

this time she gives herself time to aim carefully she cocks
her good eye at him does he think she's flirting? feints
with her right and bounces her bullseye left off the under
curve of his chin and down he goes

the referee gives him a real slow count and he's up on nine
and a half and the bell rings

and she hardly left her corner

they give her a swig of warm flat coke and up she goes swinging
he walks right into it she pounds his head he clinches
she dual sidewalls his lats the ref holds her open again but
she brings her knee up and he lets her go

he isn't quite dragging his feet yet and she isn't dancing
she moves less often than he does still but he's wasting a
lot now moving just to get distance between them she advances
in a slow outward spiral from center ring following his retreat
then seeing her chance after he wails on her shoulder awhile
she plunges him into the ropes with a semiautomatic barrage of
body belts and loops him one at the side of the face before
the ref comes over and drags them back to center

the crowd is wild some at this point want the woman to win

the last few rounds are a cinch for her age and good training
are serving her well and he is at this point a spent repetitious
old hulk though not without power he deals her a staggering
blow to the temple she trips back a moment then in a slow easy
movement lunges toward him and strikes with a lightning combination
another knockdown to the jaw he falls

he gets up and the ref blocks her away from him for a couple
of seconds so it goes until the start of the fourteenth when he jerks out
of his corner threatening death and she surely and lightly
plants herself in front of him and knocks him cold with a right hook

the crowd goes bananas debris flies bulbs snap and crackle
a large number of people applaud though many shake fists and curse
somebody puts a robe on her shoulders somebody hangs a medal
around her neck somebody starts to raise her arm

she pulls away and turns around to the body of her opponent
still on the mat she walks over to him slowly bends down picks
him up carefully raises him high above her head with both hands

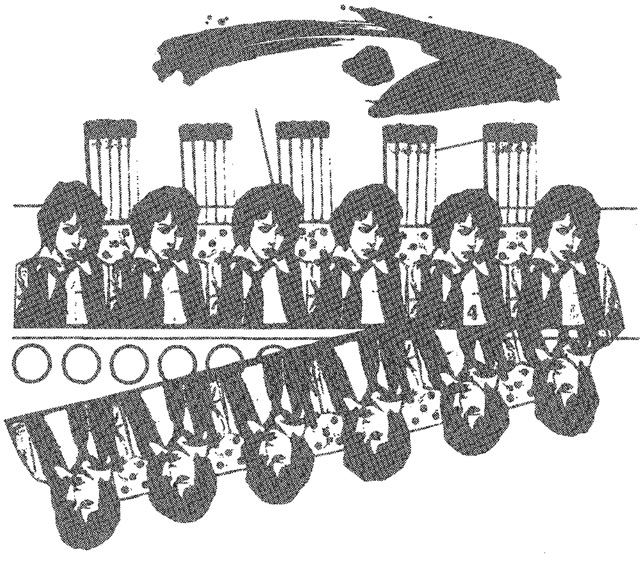
the robe falls off her wet shoulders she lowers him and tosses him
gently into the arms of his family waiting nearby

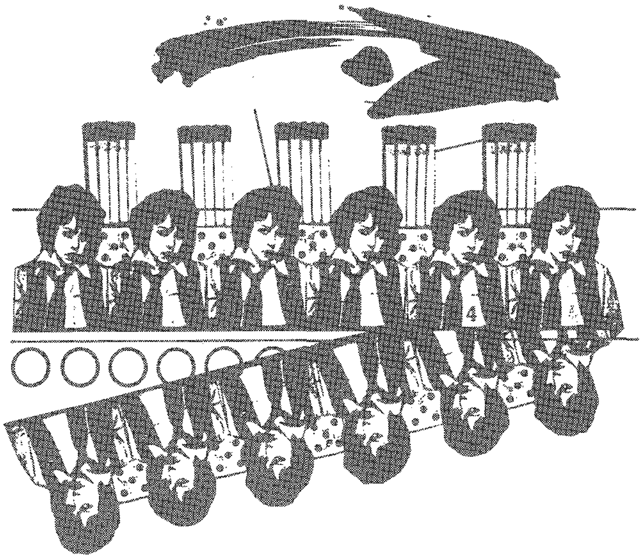
people applaud

she kicks the robe in front of her and deliberately walks
over it she breaks the chain of the medal around her neck and
drops it to the floor of the ring she takes off her gloves
untying the laces with her teeth and pulling them off between her
knees and her helmet and shoes and face guard and kidney guard
and satin shorts and leaves them where they fall the crowd is
going berserk people are trying to steal the discarded gear
security keeps them off the mat

she raises one hand and the people fall silent she has their
attention   all she does is shake her head slowly three times

the crowd remains silent as it opens a path through itself
to let her pass outside





KEITH VEIZER

WOO WOO

Woo Woo Wes has a pickup truck. The first with a cover on it in the Greater St. Louis area, he told me. He drove down to West Memphis, Arkansas, to buy one as soon as he saw it written up in *Motor Trend.* Wes amazed himself again. He could never have imagined driving to Arkansas for anything, even lunker bass. But he went and did it anyway. He was down there before he knew it. Wes does things like this all the time. They always amaze him. And sometimes me. I'm the new guard, Green.

Woo Woo Wes has a pickup truck with a top on it. He is, I imagine, in it now. Everyone else on the second shift has gone home, or left anyway. If there weren't so many working graveyard shift lately, I could see that truck real good; maybe even hear it. Woo Woo Wes isn't working overtime. But some might say Wes and Nellie, the welder, are. Others might say they aren't working at all. I don't say much of nothing. I'm Green the Guard. I got tired of being Greasy Green, the Oiling Machine.

Woo Woo Wes has a pickup truck with a top on it, and a lady welder in it. But if Wes's wife calls, I don't believe I can see it at all from here, ma'am. And I can't leave my post for a minute because I'm by myself and I can't leave the gate with all the vandalism lately, you wouldn't want to see anyone's vehicle damaged, would you? I can't be sure, but I think I saw him leaving with Steve and Johnny in the rush at midnight and he's probably going to have a drink or two. It *is* Friday night.

I didn't need to be coached, but Woo Woo coached me anyway. Then he said, "You're the guard, and you're Green. Get it?"

Woo Woo Wes has a pickup truck with a top on it, a lady welder in it, and a guard who can't quite see it. And that guard is so green that Wes's wife didn't make sounds like she believed him. 'Cause she'd been there before, and she knew the policies, and she hadn't heard about no vandalism lately, and she certainly could find out quick if he left with Steve and or Johnny, because she had a phone just like their wives did, and just like every bar in town did. And did I want to come clean with her?

"Can't be too clean. I'm Green," I chuckled.

"And didn't you used to be Greasy, Mr. Green?"

Woo Woo Wes has a pickup truck with a top on it, a lady welder in it, a guard who can't quite see it, and a wife coming up fast on it who can.

"The woman in question drove past the guardhouse in a late model green Ford at a very fast rate. However, I was able to confirm as she passed that her car did have an official parking sticker on it, so I was not extra alarmed. She proceeded to the lot at the same pace, and I followed on foot. Then I heard a crashing sound, and when I arrived at the scene of the accident I saw that the green Ford had encountered a late model blue Ford pickup truck, license number BS 1141, Illinois. The woman in question was already out of her car when I arrived at the accident scene. She was yelling at the truck she had evidently crashed into, something like, 'Wes, I know you're making woo woo in there. You better come out of there fast.' The woman went to a side vent of the pickup truck. (It had a kind of sheet metal cover over the back of it.) And then she seemed to be putting something through that vent. Shortly after that, the rear of the pickup started leaking what appeared to be smoke. And shortly after that a man and woman jumped out of the little rear door in the cover over this truck carrying what appeared to be some of their clothing and ran toward a nearby vehicle, a red late model Chevy Impala, and jumped into it. The woman who had driven in was still yelling, and couldn't be reasoned with. So I proceeded to the guard shack to call in my superior to ask about the advisability of calling in outside authorities. I had proceeded almost to the guard shack when I heard an explosion and rushed back to the scene of the accident. The late model pickup truck was in flames and the man who had jumped out of the truck jumped out of the late-model red Chevy Impala (which then proceeded to drive away) and was running to the scene of the fire. The woman shouted at him, something like, 'I guess you won't be making any more woo woo in that pickup truck.' It looked as if the man was preparing to attack the woman so I proceeded to refrain him forcibly, sustaining some minor cuts and bruises and tearing my new uniform, for which I would appreciate being reimbursed for since I was doing my job.

Signed,
M. Green"

Woo Woo Wes had a pickup truck with a top on it, a lady welder inside it, and a wife outside it. I'm still Green; but I learned a lot. □

MAXINE CHERNOFF

THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

My sister collects primitive art, so on her birthday I sent her an Eskimo calendar. Each month shows a different block print of Eskimos hunting, sitting around a fire, or stretching seal skins on frames. The prints are done in rich primary colors. They are striking in their simplicity. After the year is over, they are suitable for framing.

My sister and I are close. Although she lives in San Francisco, we talk several times a month. When I didn't hear from her three weeks after I'd sent the gift, I decided to call her.

"I hate it," she said on the phone in a nervous voice. "I know it's unkind of me to tell you, but I'm used to speaking the truth. The prints are finely executed, but I hate what's omitted. All the blood spilled, all the flesh rendered."

"I should have sent you photos of bok choy," I suggested. "Or of a tribe that only eats dead bumblebees found dead in the grass. It's life, Martha."

"I know," she answered. "Who's the anthropologist?"

She is. We talked about other things, Andy, the kids, nuclear war. Then she told me she had to go to her stained-glass workshop. Seemed she was in hot pursuit of a hummingbird.

"They look like they're hovering in the air, but their wings are really beating 1110 times a minute."

"Wearying," I said.

"Right," she answered.

After the call I went back to my desk to write her a letter. I asked her how it felt to be such a sentimentalist. I questioned her own studies of primitive art, if much of it isn't sacrifice and blood, even human blood spilled to assure favor. I never sent the letter.

Two months later I'm looking through those shopping catalogues I get in the mail, the ones from famous Texas gift stores. Last year I could have bought a ticket to ride on the first space shuttle to carry passengers or an oil painting by Richard Nixon called "Boats Escaping, Retirement Years." I opted for a new bathrobe of forest green velour. I bought Ted some sheepskin earmuffs he never wore. In fact, when I gave them to him, he said, "Elaine, you have to be kidding. I'm a translator!"

"Maybe you wanted a plastic replica of the Rosetta Stone?" I asked. Our relationship has gone downhill since. Sometimes we meet for pasta and Chianti, but our conversations are strained.

Well, this Christmas I'm determined to choose gifts with more care. Martha still hasn't forgiven me, though her hummingbird was a success. She sold it at a small art fair for $126.50. I like her audacity. The extra fifty cents might have discouraged customers, but Martha's uncompromising.

First I consider gift certificates, but they're safe as white bread. Then I call a friend and ask her what she buys her sister. "Houseslippers. My sister loves houseslippers. This Christmas I bought her a pair monogrammed MM. I found them at a little art deco shop."

"Are those her initials?" I ask.

"Marilyn Monroe. They're her initials. I thought my sister would get a kick out of wearing Marilyn Monroe's slippers."

My friend is no help. Martha would call me uncaring. "That poor woman died in her bed. Some people even say she was killed. How sad to own the slippers in which she thought her last thoughts!"

A few nights later I'm reading a journal of aging. As we all know, the Eskimos used to leave their elderly to die on the ice floes. The old took it in good spirits, but even so. Now it's more popular to have the elderly move in with an unmarried daughter who not only cares for them in their illnesses, but if they have no teeth, chews the tough and gristley seal meat for them.

That night I dream I'm a young Eskimo woman with very strong teeth. My job is to chew seal meat not only for my own parents but for my sister's in-laws, my great Aunt Ida (who has red hair in my dream), and for her pet retriever, Yuk-Yuk. When I wake up, my jaws ache, and I remember that it's December seventeenth. If I don't send Martha a present soon, I'll have to send her an apology.

When I get home that night from dinner with Ted, this time Moo-Shoo Pork in a too-crowded basement in Chinatown, I call Martha.

"Did you ever eat Moo-Shoo Pork?" I ask.

"It looks like chewed food. I don't like it," she says.

How is it that my sister always knows my latest concerns and critiques them before they're announced?

"Did you know that Eskimos no longer let their parents die on ice floes? Rather, they chew the food for their toothless elders and care for them the rest of their lives."

"The job usually falls to the unmarried daughter," she adds, meaning me.

"That's right! I'd be the one chewing the food."

Martha chortles. I can hear Andy in the background telling the kids not to paint on the white rug.

"How are you and Ted?" she asks.

"He didn't like the earmuffs I gave him last year."

"Speaking of presents," she says, "I sent you a purse I got at an ethnic fair. It's from China. It shows a duck hiding in some rushes while a feast is taking place in a palace to the left. I thought it wonderfully humorous."

"Did you ever think," I ask her, "how nothing is funny except predation? Think of cartoons. The roadrunner eluding the coyote, Bugs Bunny hiding from Elmer Fudd. The punchline is, 'You can't eat me.' "

"You're deep, Elaine," she says. We say good-bye soon after.

The next day I'm in a little gourmet shop that specializes in French cheeses and dessert items. Still thinking of those Eskimo women chewing for their parents, I'm having trouble doing any worthwhile shopping. Finally, I buy Ted two pounds of brandied cherries. As long as he can't wear them on his ears, I feel certain he'll like them. Now for Martha. I look up at a shining mountain of white food processers, able to grind, puree, stir and aerate, to name a few verbs. I ask the clerk to wrap one and I enclose this card: "When mother needs an ice floe, remember who owns the food processer. Love, Elaine." ☐

C.P. FULLINGTON

QUILLS

Gold, yellow from the color of old newspaper clippings to that of overripe corn, orange and all the divisions of red; crimson, scarlet, burgundy, garnet and ruby, russet and cherry, blood and fire. Down below all this color, walking through the leaves—scuffle, scuffle—goes a middle aged woman. By herself. Dangerous business, wandering these woods alone. Especially, the way the small town neighbors would put it, especially for a woman. Who, after all, has no reason to be there. She's not looking up at all that roaring autumnal extravagance overhead, not hunting mushrooms, not collecting bark for some weird crafts project or leaves for the open house at the new junior high. Anything could happen. A convict from the prison. A runaway bulldozer from the county dump. A late, sleepy and irritable water moccasin in a drift of leaves. Concealed holes in which to break an ankle, falling branches, abandoned twists of rusty barbed wire. Better to stay home where the unpredictable was not so available.

Two kids, a husband, a dog and a pair of ricebirds: that's home. The husband is a chemist, the dog's a yellow Lab, and the kids—right now—are a football player and an artist. And the woman, crunching and rustling along, has just turned forty-three, at 6:15 this very morning, has had to suffer through breakfast in bed, one romantic and two cute birthday cards, and a mostly unintelligible telephone call from her aunt Greta. The birthday presents are waiting to be opened after dinner, after they all come home from dinner 'out,' dinner at some overpriced family restaurant which she will have to appreciate, in twenty words or more, several times during its courses and at least twice afterwards. She knows that routine, just as she knows pretty well what she can expect to find in the presents.

She snorts disgustedly, thinking about the presents, and looks around to see if there's anyone who might have heard. A reflex, that caution, and of course there isn't anyone. That's why she's out in the woods, because nobody goes down the hill from town into the trees except hunters in bird season, and children, and the old guy who owns the hundred acre wood (which is really eighty-seven since the highway went in, according to the old guy himself). Hunting season doesn't start for a week, and all the kids, hers and everybody else's, are in school, so she has the trees and the leaves all to herself. She thinks, slightly amused, that maybe it's the other way around, that maybe the wood has her all to itself for awhile. So she says, out loud and rather slyly, "Show me something. I dare you, old forest."

The forest doesn't produce on command, so she turns off the old cart road she's been following and heads down a gully toward the stream. There at the place where the path branches off the overgrown road, there's not even the faintest suggestion of water talk in the air. But a little way down, ten or fifteen steps, no more, the sound begins, almost indistinguishable from the sound of bees high up in some rotten-crowned maple. She likes to stop when she first hears the stream and back up a few steps until she can't hear it, then step forward again, trying to find the exact point where it begins. Sometimes she stays there for so long, rocking back and forth those two or three steps, that she gets dizzy and has to sit down on one of the logs and shake the faint, insistent humming out of her head.

Today she doesn't try it. The wind is blowing toward the stream anyway, carrying noises away from her. This is not good, she reflects, thinking about why she has come today. The noise she makes, clumping down the slope, is probably audible a quarter of a mile away, to anything other than a human being.

Coming out onto the ledge above the stream, she stops, checking for company again. Several kinds of ferns at her feet, growing out of cracks in the rock; a small fluffy looking woodpecker on the trunk of a maple below the ledge; lots more trees, but the stream bottom is empty of people, or animals for that matter. Sometimes there are deer. She likes finding the animals down there. They're a kind of company she understands, quiet, not too close. Not like her family, who never seem to shut up.

She sits down, after piling up a cushion of leaves with her foot, and leans back against a beech, waiting, looking up and down the black and silver shimmer and riffle of the moving water.

It is those birthday presents which have sent her off today. She would like to know how she ever got such a predictably American family. She picks up a chunk of rock out of the leaves and leaf mold and chucks it at the water. It falls a foot or so short, without even a decent thud. A can of almond roca, she thinks, an engagement book, or address book covered in blue imitation leather, and a record and bathrobe or nightgown from Sam. She can't remember if it was a bathrobe for Christmas, last winter, or if last year was the time he got her those awful after-ski style bedroom slippers with the imitation fur.

"I want," she says, looking up into the branches over her head, "a tin of barley sugar drops, a pair of cashmere and kidskin driving gloves, a two week vacation in Rio with my sister Elizabeth, a new piano, and a llama."

The leaves and branches move, telegraphing a reply down the trunk into her shoulders. She smiles. Leans forward to get a better view of the open space along the stream.

All right, she thinks, not a llama. A porcupine. Make it a slow, prickly, not very intelligent, silent porcupine.

"You'd better hurry up with it," she tells the woods, "or I'll be finding my way back through the dark." Then reaching into her pocket for the chocolate bar she's been carrying all week, she settles back into a more comfortable position to wait for her porcupine, or the dark, whichever comes first. □

ELLEN HAVRE WEIS

TRIO

1. Out To Sea

If she extended her neck just the inch when lying down, she'd be soft in the crook of his shoulders. He was thin but his back was broad. His shoulder blades angled like two sharp fins. Sometimes if she'd try, she could ride with him; the waves and the sense of a strong body who could not only keep her afloat but could carry her out to sea.

One day while swimming she watched a diver make a perfect dive. What a smart way to practice, she thought. Arms tucked inside the suit to learn balance.

When she looked again she realized it was not for practice. The diver had no arms from the shoulders down.

What kind of amphibious creature was this? She'd dreamed last night that a boy and girl were running away to her house to sleep together. It was England or Ireland and a high stone wall followed the river between their houses. She saw fins and wondered why dolphins were in fresh water. Suddenly they were a whole school and swimming closer. They bellowed out of the water huge like Lochness, their bellies distended like blowfish.

Do you swim with those? she asked the girl in her dream.

Of course, she answered. We all swim together.

2. Dependencies

The question was money. Three of us were living together. We rented a two-and-a-half bedroom place. The half was his: he paid less rent. Though what it did was give him license to be in either of the larger rooms. Spatial rights, he called them. Sleeping privileges, I said.

The question arose on the third of the month. I didn't mind it because it brought on a sense of urgency. She didn't mind it because it brought closer ties with him. He hated it because he was always short. He decided we should go out for pizza and discuss it.

Who'll pay for the pizza? she asked, looking directly at me.

The simple question provoked a very complex discussion which he led. Each of us had our own means of support, he reminded us. She by insurance from her father's cancer; myself, from my parents; and he, through a weekly unemployment check. Did we realize all of the severe social and moral implications?

The question, still unanswered, drove home with us in the crowded front seat of the truck. Inside we wrote notes. I made out a check for the rent. She wrote a check to me. He wrote IOU notes to both of us.

Both of us? I asked. I thought she'd pay your share this month.

She said, I thought we were splitting it, and looked longingly at him.

I'm sick of this shit, he screamed.

He shoved the rocker he'd been sitting in against the wall. The arm cracked and all but one of the back slats came out. The left leg rocked over the neck of her guitar which had fallen from the vibrations of the wall. The guitar tilted and the chair kept rocking over and over the six strings, producing an eerie, begging tone.

3. Poor Circulation

She was not travelling; she was not in school; and she was not, as they say in the books, working hard. Since he had left, every morning she awoke her first action before leaving her bed was to pummel herself in accordance with Gayelord Hauser's plan for her "*Passport to Vibrant, Adventurous Living.*" She had been following Gayelord's truths religiously, so wanting to "relax in spite of everything."

You know how it is? she said in the twilight of that last evening, To have that terrible awful ache in the arch of your foot and it's so bad it's barely detectable. And you know too that no doctor, chiropractor or psychic can cure it; well that's how I feel about you. You're the ache in my arches. And that's how I feel.

1952 was before she was born, but she understood the Cold War and why, therefore, on page 138 Gayelord wrote: If the Russians would only laugh. "Laughter is a physical manifestation of an intellectual reaction." And intellectually, she identified with the Russian blood in her. And secretly felt proud. And so jumped ahead to page 172 where the advanced stage of pummelling was recommended.

In two weeks she had lost four pounds and gained a dull blue-grey-orange eraser-sized stamp on her left thigh. She turned to page 64 and discovered that she was lacking in Vitamin B, then quickly flipped to page 202 to copy the liver dinner suggested in the recipes of "The Esquire Diet."

She was really changing. Although this was 1978 and she was fully aware of the now pitied early Fifties, she typed in red, with black punctuation this message of Gayelord's. It was headed under "*Don't Let The Light Go Out*" and read: "Every once in a while I meet a woman who proudly, almost boastfully, announces that she has never in all of her life used any make-up of any kind whatsoever. And usually, as I look at her, I think to myself, 'Sister, you look it!' "

She liked the cadence of the Hollywood tough-guy "Sister," and taped one copy of the message onto her mirror and a second copy on her refrigerator. She read it often. She took it to heart and began shadowing her eyes in green, rolling her lips on a small cylinder marked "mauve."

When six months had elapsed and she had had no acute pains of the "arch-villain" (page 89), and when she finally felt "the health-giving powers of the Universe" had seeped in her blood forever; and that her circulation was no longer poor, but was travelling through her now mulberry-stained body like a swift evening prayer, she called him up and invited him over on this late fall day.

She was certainly happier, certainly healthier as the title of Gayelord's book attested to. And she offered this news to him. And he received it willingly. And he kissed her.

And when they began to make love she used the excuse of the unheated apartment to insist on remaining clothed; or almost. But it was not dark; night hadn't fallen; even dusk had not come. And he saw her and said Jesus what have you done to yourself and she whimpered an almost indecipherable—Pummel me—. He looked at her, incredulous, and louder, Pummel me Oh pummel me she repeated she cried. □

SANDRA J. KOLANKIEWICZ

ISLA

After the hurricane the coral was broken up, floating loose around the reefs. Within a few weeks it became toxic and the fish died when they breathed it, hundreds of them undulating towards the beaches on the waves.

One morning we woke and there were at least forty of them on their sides, lapping the shore with each rush of water, sloshing to rest for a moment and being carried by the current further down the beach. That morning we filled garbage bags with them and hauled them up the dune to the heap. But after the beach was cleared and we stood talking on the sand we could see more of them coming, their flat bodies bobbing up and down on the waves.

Some of them were still barely alive, opening and closing their mouths, eyes swiveling in their round sockets. We picked them up too, not caring that perhaps it was more painful for them to suffocate on land. Harvey stood with his hands planted on his hips, his sunburned belly hanging over his trunks as he watched the fish float in. He refused to pick them up as we dragged our plastic bags along the shoreline. He complained about the smell and moved only to push his sunglasses back on his face. His forehead under his hat was beaded with sweat.

We gave up in front of the grove where the tide was the strongest. We could not fight the waves, they brought more and more dead fish and bits of the broken coral.

No one walks there except sometimes Ponce, in the evening or morning light. The first person is so difficult. I lean back in my hammock and watch his slow return across the sand.

If you lie long enough in a palm grove you will hear the coconuts dropping, a final thud on the sand. There is nothing that will quench a thirst more than the water inside. We break them open with a pick, using the flat razor end, the pointed end buried in the sand. We stand on the handle and bring them down hard again and again, stabbing the green flesh until we hear it hit against the nut inside. Then we split it with a knife.

Ponce respects the coconut trees. He owns the grove without possessing any of them. They belong to the island and with a stroke of luck or destiny, he says, he lives on the island, a successful man who wants none of his success, who perhaps feels guilty for it, so he stays in the grove, goes out on his boat to fish, or walks to the beach where no one else will go.

No one writes a story of a hammock, he told me, although a hammock will hold your whole body, a Mayan hammock, cradling you into the night more than any lover, the air underneath cooling you more than any bed. If the rope breaks, he said, it is not the fault of the hammock, it is the fault of the rope.

When the boy drowned off the beach Ponce was with us drinking vodka. He went into the sea with his mask and flippers, drunk like the rest of us who paced on the shore. He soon came back, trailing his fins behind him.

Fifteen minutes under water is too long, he told us walking back to the grove. The boy is dead.

The ambulance came and the men in their fishing boats. Divers leapt into the water to search the caves, taking a little time because they knew it was too late. The islanders had heard the siren and they came running, lining up on the beach, waiting with arms folded in front of them. The body was found stuck under the coral, lungs exploded. He was a boy who had just arrived on the latest ferry. His brother wept on his knees in the sand.

My first day I swam there. The current carried me towards the rocks and I stayed in place, struggling until it let me go.

We whistled when someone went in too far, or we said nothing. None of us believed the sea would kill until the boy who just arrived.

I had a dream last night, says Ponce, that somehow the strings of a hammock were being played like an instrument. It was beautiful and perfect. He picks up his drink and nods toward the red hammock strung between two coconut palms, swaying in the salty breeze.

The hammock was woven by a man, he says. But the music came from the wind. □

PAMELA ERBE

A KISS

The funniest thing about it—not funny, ha ha, but funny, odd—the funniest thing about it, Rosie thought, was where it happened. Was Charlie not more concerned with appearance than anyone else she knew? It was Charlie who wore only Gant and Dior shirts and said so. Charlie said, "The only cognac worth drinking is Remy," and he drank it, though he had no income. Brand names were the touchstone of his ego; he had built himself on a foundation of expensive labels, taking his cue from the ads in the glossier magazines. For someone like that, the choice of place was really funny. Well, maybe that wasn't the funniest thing. Maybe, thought Rosie, the funniest thing about it was how it happened. Or maybe that it had happened at all? Of course, that was obviously the funniest thing—that it had even happened. What could he have been thinking of? Charlie! My God.

And funny too was how she had been treating Ed ever since—Ed, Charlie's friend, Charlie's tennis partner, Rosie's husband. Suddenly she remembered all the things that bothered him and she stopped leaving her slips and nightgowns on the bathroom door peg, and made sure to wipe the butter off the knives she used during the weeks Ed did dishes. She kept wondering, Doesn't he know? Didn't he see? And Louise. What about her? Had Louise been acting funny toward her since Charlie, Louise's husband, had kissed Rosie, Ed's wife, at the Chinese restaurant? Rosie had nerve: she would look right into Ed's eyes and ask, "So. How's Charlie?" She asked Louise, "Anything new with you and Charlie?" If they had any ideas, they weren't letting on, so Rosie was left to it, wondering just what was the funniest thing about it and just what Charlie had meant.

Probably nothing, she told herself, probably nothing at all. Just a joke. But did a man who turned purple because his parents sent him three perfectly nice Arrow shirts for Christmas do things just for a joke? And what about the time he had mortified poor Aileen when, tasting her *pesto Genovese* (for which, she said proudly, she had grown her own basil—with just this dinner party in mind), he had chewed, frowned, and asked her about the pine nuts. Well, either Aileen had just forgotten them or, more likely, had decided to do without. Who would know? And pine nuts cost the moon, especially for feeding ten, especially on a professor's salary. "Well," he had said, laying down his fork, "it's nice, but it's hardly *pesto Genovese* without pine nuts."

Oh, he could be hostile when he wanted to be, so maybe it was hostility. But if so, toward her? Toward Ed? Louise? Anyway, Rosie found herself being extra nice to Ed in all the small ways, and then she had to ask herself, Am I feeling guilty about this? And then she would shake her head a few times, get up, and go do something to take her mind off it.

It crawled back, as she spooned new potting soil into a bigger pot for the gardenia, as she sat reading her students' papers, as she did difficult calculations in her head to compare the prices of unequally sized boxes of detergent in the supermarket: *What did it mean?* She would have liked to have talked it over with a friend, with Sarah or Aileen or Theonne. But she couldn't because they all knew each other, went to parties together, they were such an inbred little group. Month after month after year after year of dinners and wine-tastings and trips and charades with Charlie and Louise, Sarah and Reg, Aileen and Jack, Theonne and Max. Maybe, she thought, Charlie had kissed all the women. The idea of the four of them laughing and making chit-chat about Cuisinarts and the price of Sterling and their weak net games, all the time stealing furtive glances at Charlie, their husbands, and each other, struck her funny. Loading the shopping cart, she laughed out loud and told herself she really had to stop thinking about it.

Clearly there was trouble between Charlie and Louise. Everyone knew it, though, abiding by the unwritten laws of their little group, no one ever talked about it. Well, not much. Sometimes, having lunch with Sarah or Aileen (Theonne tended to keep her distance and so was rarely taken into anyone's confidence), Rosie or her companion might say, "Has Louise said anything to you? She and Charlie were really at each other's throats the other night."

And everyone pitied Louise, agreeing quietly that Charlie was becoming positively strange. "Imagine having to live with him! I mean, he's attractive and all, but my God!" And the question that always ended these exchanges, "Why do you suppose Louise stands for it?" For the situation was intolerable, and Louise had read all the books, seen all the movies. When she went with Rosie and Ed to see "An Unmarried Woman," she cried so much that she ran out of tissues and had to use Ed's handkerchief. Charlie had refused to go, saying he didn't like polemics. Louise was intelligent, personable, attractive, interesting. No one could understand it, and even the men were beginning, in a way uncharacteristic of them, to wonder aloud. "Do you think Louise is getting ready to dump Charlie?" Ed said one night after a party. They were undressing for bed and Ed had decided on a nightcap. He came in from the kitchen with the bottle of brandy and two snifters and that question, and he flopped on the bed. "What do you think, Rosie?"

Standing in front of the mirror, pinching little rolls of flesh through her nightgown, Rosie felt herself go hot. Maybe Ed *had* seen it, after all, and this was his typically courteous, gentlemanly way of bringing it up. "Well," she said, going to the bed but not looking at her husband, "all I can say is, if I were in her place, I'd have left long ago."

"Everybody says that," Ed said, handing her a glass. "But don't you sense more than the usual distance there lately?"

"I can't say that I do," Rosie said, picking up her book and settling back against the pillows. "She's obviously got a neurotic attachment to him. Every woman we know agrees she'd have left Charlie ages ago, but there's Louise, still smiling and hostessing and putting up with him, pretending everything's OK."

"I don't know," Ed mused. "Didn't you see how she glared at him when she was acting out *Dancing on the Grave of a Son-of-a-Bitch*?"

Rosie laughed. "Who on your team thought of that one? That was hilarious. But I didn't notice Louise glaring at Charlie. What happened was, when she finally got to the last words of the title, she pointed at Charlie and Theonne said 'son-of-a-bitch' right away. And Charlie glared at *her*. Remember?" Maybe Charlie *had* kissed Theonne.

But Ed shook his head. "You must have missed it," he said. "I was right across from her and believe me, when she pointed, she also glared."

"I almost felt sorry for Charlie when Theonne said that," Rosie said. "But I think she had the title pretty much already. There aren't many books that begin 'Dancing on the Grave of a.' And it's a pretty literate group."

"You ever read those poems?" Ed asked in what Rosie thought was an unusually quiet way.

"Oh, a long time ago," she laughed, and she reached beneath the down comforter and pinched his thigh. "Long before I met you."

"I don't mean to deny Charlie's sexism," Ed went on, as if trying to explain. "He sets himself up for hostility."

"Nobody flaunts it like Charlie," she agreed, wondering just where Ed planned to take this conversation. Louise, graduate-degreed in history, had long ago, for reasons she never discussed, gone into business. Several years of advancement had put her in a position of power and authority, and also of little free time, extended working hours, frequent trips. Charlie, who had taught art history before he was denied tenure, was still unemployed, living off Louise. He kept saying, when anyone had the nerve to ask, "Oh, I'm looking into things here and there," and for awhile everyone believed he just might be. But it soon became clear that he was looking into nothing but increasing depression, which he translated into a vicious arrogance. With every hour free, he did not lift a finger around their very large house: he never did laundry, never cooked a meal, washed a dish or dusted a piece of furniture or went to the market, but left it all to Louise. Sarah had once asked, "Louise, why don't you hire someone to come in and do the housework?" To which Charlie had responded, "We can't afford it." And did Louise ever say anything? Louise with her tight little smile and brief, piercing laugh?

"No," Rosie said, "I didn't think you were denying anything. I'm going to read now, OK?"

Only once had Louise come even close to opening up about the troubles with Charlie. It was during one of their Sunday tennis games, hers and Rosie's. Rosie's serves were going nowhere but into the net. She groaned. "How do I expect to play decent tennis on four hours' sleep?"

From across the net Louise in her tidy white shorts and shirt said, "You should have called. We could have made it later." Louise was an early riser. She liked to play at eight, before the university courts filled up.

"I didn't want to wake Charlie," Rosie said.

"You guys played pretty late, did you?"

"Till three," Rosie said. "Too late."

"Did you win?"

"Ten dollars. OK, Louise, here comes an ace." She tossed the ball up and slammed her racket into it. The ball bounced three feet in front of her and sailed upwards. "I think I need to stop for a minute and collect myself," she said.

They sat on the hardtop on opposite sides of the net. Louise said, "How'd the costume go over?"

Rosie laughed. "Hilarious," she said. "We kept laughing all night."

"It cost twenty-seven dollars to rent that," Louise said. She was not laughing. "That's the most expensive one yet. Really, sometimes it gets to me, the way he throws my money around." The "my" was so soft that Rosie assumed it was an unintentional slip, because Louise was religious about not laying claim to her income as her own, but referring to it as hers and Charlie's, *theirs*.

The men and Rosie and Theonne played poker every other Friday night, and Charlie was known for the disguises he sometimes showed up in. He had once come in a tuxedo, once in a disconcertingly lifelike mask of the Ayatollah Khomeni, once, in November, in bathing trunks and zorries with a towel draped over his shoulders. But the previous night he had outdone himself by showing up at Ed and Rosie's in a complete chicken costume—bloated body, feathers, enormous yellow feet. Whenever he went to the kitchen for a beer, he scraped the big yellow feet with their plastic claws on the tiles and clucked. All night long he punctuated the game with deadpan lines: "There was only five-sixty in the pot—chickenfeed," and "I fold—this hand's a yolk," and "A bet like that shows a lot of pluck." On the last hand, he reached into his lap and raised the bet two eggs. Where he had kept them hidden all night, nobody knew. "Good night, all," he said when the game broke up. "I had a good time, but I'm stewed." And he went waddling off to his Volvo, leaving the rest of them howling at the front door.

"Does it seem to you that Charlie is inordinately fond of disguises?" Louise asked.

Rosie looked into her face to see if the question were serious and saw furrows and frowns all over. "I don't know," Rosie said. "How does it seem to you?" Rosie was a professor of clinical psychology.

But Louise ignored the opening. She simply shrugged, got to her feet, brushed off the seat of her shorts, and said, "Ready to try again?"

"Why did your husband kiss me on the mouth and try to stick his tongue between my teeth in the Chinese restaurant?" Rosie wanted to say, but didn't. She tossed the ball to Louise and said, "I concede game one. Your serve."

Not long after that morning they had all been over at Louise and Charlie's house, drinking gin and tonics on the back porch and playing badminton and bocce in the yard. What was it they were talking about? Something about the university, of course—the place at which all of them worked (except Louise and now Charlie) was the most prevalent topic of conversation, an old bone they returned to and gnawed on when discussions of books or films or tennis wore thin. Oh yes—new regulations at the library, stipulating that professors could no longer sign books out and keep them as long as they liked, but had to return them in four weeks, just like everyone else. Most of the assembled took exception to the new rule, and Max, who taught English, even went so far as to say that he could not see the point in his having to return a book and let it sit, unused, on the shelf when he needed it for his work "and students today don't read." Scandalous, was the general opinion, just another nail in the coffin of professorial authority and prerogative. Rosie, glancing somewhat warily at the angry faces of her friends, ventured a slight disagreement, though on the whole, she saw their point. "Maybe it's different in the sciences," she began, "where it isn't a question of reading, *per se,* but of a student's needing a particular journal or book for a particular experiment. Most of our students are working on experiments for which, obviously, they have to write reports. For which, obviously, they need access to the previous literature on the subject. Now, let's say a student has come to his or her conclusion—"

She never got any further, her sentence hacked off in the middle by a gasp of rage coming from Charlie's direction. She stopped. She looked at him, as did everyone else. "Did I say something to upset you?" she asked.

"It's that idiotic 'his or her,' " Charlie exploded. "*Why,* in the name of all that is reasonable, do you women insist on using that awkward and very ugly construction when *his* is a perfectly acceptable and inclusive pronoun?"

For a moment, no one said a word. Predictably, Theonne got up and took her glass inside, saying only "Excuse me," as she went. And then finally, Max said, "Well, gee, Charlie—I don't see why it bothers you so much. It isn't as if language were sacred and unchangeable, and I think we are all aware that the use of masculine pronouns to signify all of humanity is an anthropological artifact, and that if 'his/her' grates on the ear, it is probably only the chafing of the unfamiliar."

"Couldn't have said it better myself, Max," Rosie smiled.

Charlie turned to her and snorted. Actually snorted, through his nose. "You couldn't have said that if you'd memorized it, Rosie," Then, turning to Max, he added, "And you. From the broads I can at least anticipate this kind of nonsense, but you ought to know better." Max chuckled and shook his head. Ed, who was in immunology and so did not venture an opinion, muttered, "Why don't you call a halt to the gin and tonics, Charlie?" Louise jumped up and suggested immediate bocce. Rosie sat in her chair, feeling stupidly like crying, and wondered, Does this have anything to do with the fact that I didn't kiss him back?

When they got home that evening, Ed said, "Charlie should have apologized to you."

"Charlie was drunk," she said. "He's become a very ugly drunk lately. And anyway, it wasn't personal. Just further evidence of his feeling emasculated because he's living off Louise and his department is hiring a lot of women."

"He owes you an apology," Ed insisted. "And it's not the first thing he owes you an apology for."

Here it comes, she thought. Now, do I pretend I don't know what he's talking about, or do I just say, Yes, you're right? "What are you talking about?" she said.

"I am talking," Ed said, in an exaggerated way, "about the time last spring when we went to Chicago and you wore that low-cut dress to dinner and Charlie said, 'Here she is folks, Miss Feminist of 1978. Doesn't she have nice tits?' Remember?"

Rosie laughed. Oh, how she laughed, with what relief. "But Ed," she said, "he apologized to you for that."

"Yeah. I'm beginning to find Charlie's company very distasteful," Ed said. "I'm beginning to think he's just a hopeless case."

Lying in bed, Rosie realized that she had completely forgotten that remark in Chicago. That was long before the kiss. Funny that she had let that humiliating moment slip from her memory, when she'd been pondering that kiss for such a long time and trying to figure it out. Maybe it was all of a piece. Maybe Charlie had never liked her at all. Maybe she had imagined that his behavior toward her had changed since the kiss, imagined a new surliness when he spoke to her, imagined how sometimes she would glance up and catch him staring at her in a way that could only be described as rapacious.

There were the facts—twin facts, in Rosie's way of looking at things—that Charlie's two great preoccupations recently were Brooke Shields and movies that combined sex and violence in an unsavory way. He had begun, he announced without a trace of self-consciousness over Sarah's cous-cous, to frequent a movie house downtown that specialized in hardcore S/M. He would describe films he went to in the afternoons like "Wicked Licks" (leather-clad women who whipped men and were all decapitated in the end by a leather-clad hulk) and "Flay It Again, Sam" (virginal women drop in at Sam's place for torture and pain). Everyone assumed he had not actually seen those films, but had made up the plots for shock value. But it left Rosie wondering. Wouldn't she have described that kiss as—unfriendly, at least? Bordering on brutal? She looked down the long line of Ed's sleeping body beside her and wondered how he could not have seen it. Or maybe he just hadn't wanted to see what he had seen.

It had been eight of them at the Chinese restaurant—Aileen and Jack were in Yugoslavia on Jack's sabbatical. As usual, it had been Charlie's idea. He had read the feature story on Chinese "new cuisine" and the new restaurants that offered it in a magazine, and after some telephone research, decided that New China Food offered the most exotic dishes at the best prices. "Tea-smoked duck," he said, smacking his lips into Ed's ear over the phone, "and jade lobster. Oh, and red-cooked shark fin, of course."

"Of course," Ed said and shrugged toward Rosie, who was chopping onions at the counter. "What, exactly, is red-cooked shark fin?" After Charlie had explained, adding that the fin had to be gotten from New York because whole shark fin was not widely available, only the rather dry shredded variety, Ed asked, "Is it any good?"

"The article said it's great," Charlie said. "And look, any restaurant that has the nerve to call itself New China Food has got to be good. So they'll make us a banquet for twenty-five per person if we have eight people. You want in?" They agreed they would go together, all eight of them in two cars. "I hope nobody wants anything Chinese-American, like egg roll," were Charlie's last words.

"Charlie doesn't want anybody to embarrass him by asking where the egg rolls are," Ed told Rosie. "You have been warned."

Rosie shook her head and wept over her onions. "Why do you suppose he's like that?" she said. But Ed didn't know.

Their banquet was set for eight, but they arrived at the restaurant at seven. "We want time to enjoy the excellent bar," Charlie had said. And he enjoyed four Chivas on the rocks, despite Louise's whispered, but nonetheless audible, entreaties that he wouldn't be able to enjoy the meal if he kept on. So maybe that was it, Rosie would think later. Was Charlie drunk? He certainly didn't seem drunk, though there was the overpowering sweet smell of alcohol in that kiss. But no, no—she would not sidestep the problem by chalking it up to a drunkenness that had not seemed evident.

Their waiter had called them promptly at eight, and they picked up their coats and things, because the bar had no closet or coatrack, and trooped into the dining room. There was a closet there, at the other end of the room, and Ed and Max took on the task of piling all the coats and scarves over their arms to go hang them up, and Louise and Theonne and Reg were all making for the bathrooms, and there was only Sarah left, with her back to them—Sarah and a dining roomful of people—to see when Rosie felt Charlie's arm reach around her waist and pull her body to his and when she saw his face descending onto hers and then felt the hard pressure of his mouth completely covering her own and the distinct sensation of his tongue probing at her clenched teeth, like the tongue of any one of the junior high boys who had wanted to try French kissing before she was ready and kept her mouth clamped primly shut until one of them, a cute one, hissed, "What are you—the front of a bus?" and she had dutifully loosened her teeth enough to receive the wildly wiggling tongue. Only she hadn't with Charlie. Her lips had remained sealed tight. His timing was perfect, so that just as Ed and Max turned to say, "Have we got everything?" Charlie pulled away, and all they saw was their friend standing there smiling, and Rosie next to him, her eyes looking down the front of her dress, which her hands were busily smoothing. And then Sarah (where had Sarah been looking all that eternity while Charlie's mouth was pressed over hers?), Sarah said, "Let's the three of us sit down."

They had their banquet and nobody said anything gauche and much of the food was delicious, though the red-cooked shark fin made Rosie's eyes water and nose run so violently that she couldn't eat it, and she thought Charlie smirked at her as he put another large piece into his mouth and chewed, though she could not be sure. What she remembered about the meal were the exquisite taste of jade lobster and the tension with which she waited to feel a surreptitious hand on her knee or thigh—a sensation that never materialized. In fact, Charlie was so like himself, gave so completely no indication that anything out of the ordinary had happened, that she began to wonder if she had not made the whole thing up. She and Ed, after six years of initially stormy and lately calmly contented marriage, were certainly not the wild lovers they had once been, but she had not been aware that she was dissatisfied. Maybe she was? Maybe she was looking for something exciting, a little dangerous? But surely she would not choose Charlie!

She was very subdued in the car on the way back and at Sarah and Reg's later, where they played two simultaneous games of Scrabble and drank cognac and Scotch. At one point, late, late in the night, she went to the kitchen for a glass of water and, looking up, was horrified to see Charlie coming through the doorway, while the others were all safely back at their tables far down the hall. She put the carafe quickly back into the refrigerator and began to gulp water, but Charlie said only, "Ice bucket's empty," and went to the freezer and scooped out ice cubes as she made her escape.

Well, hardly escape, she thought. Escape from what, exactly? What had been the threat? Was he after an affair? Was that it? Hadn't Charlie, when they had all first met, seemed very fond of her—to the point that Ed commented one evening that Charlie seemed "taken" with her? And his behavior since he had been kicked out of the university for lack of publication was so blatantly self-destructive: did he think having an affair with the wife of a friend, a friend of his wife, was sufficiently terrible? Was he looking for a way to make Louise leave him, knowing he was dragging her down but was too weak to leave her? Maybe that was it. Maybe he'd been seeking an affair, and her closed mouth and rigid body had told him she was not the one to pursue. But then, why would he try it out in the open like that, instead of a secluded spot? Like Sarah and Reg's kitchen? Or at any party, when she went upstairs to use the bathroom—he could have followed her, met her in the hall, kissed her then, said something. No, no, hostility was the only possible explanation. Unless it was just affection gone wrong, or drunkenness, or something else she had not yet thought of.

All these thoughts pursued each other as a dog does its tail, went round and round in her head and yielded only exhaustion. The memory was fading now, was so pale that it was like one of those Polaroid images working in reverse. Had it been, after all, just a peck on the lips? She had no idea why Charlie had kissed her in the Chinese restaurant. Maybe she should say something to Ed. But that would upset everything. The best thing to do was just to forget it. Put it out of your mind, she told herself firmly. Just stop thinking about it, she said out loud, and a woman pulling a small, bundled-up child past her toward the stamps window turned and stared. ☐

PHILIP SCHULTZ

LATE NIGHT PHONECALLS

All night the man upstairs walks to Madam Butterfly,
dragging his body like something he must be rid of,

every night this human scraping at the stillness
as you stare into the window light across the courtyard

which no one ever turns off & which one can look into
indefinitely late at night

as if it were a kind of truth,
a preoccupation with the significance of details

like the shrill human cry
three buildings away

which isn't ecstasy or pride
but a fact in the ongoing mystery of our lives

such as when the phone rings just before dawn
& no one speaks & the hush at the far end

splits the last shred of darkness
into a tuning fork of light & everything you fear

or desire is known by a stranger
who means you the greatest harm

& you watch the dark curl off the roofs
lifting yourself like a swimmer out of one dream into another,

grasping at the phosphorescent surface of the world
which, like the light across the courtyard,

no one ever turns off,
not all night long.

Digging Limestone

Solid as rock, we say. Build your foundations upon stone, we say. But of course the rocks are not fixed. Waters carve them, winds abrade them, heat and cold fracture them, the twitches of the heaving earth buckle and warp them. The sands on our beaches started out as bits of mountain. The soil that feeds us is made up chiefly of the scourings of stones. Right this minute, the oceans are manufacturing the stuff, and so are volcanoes. The very continents glide about like great rafts, floating on earth's molten mantle, one plate grinding against another, new rocks surging up from trenches in the seabed, old rocks slithering down. A time-lapse film of any landscape, with frames shot once every thousand years or so, would reveal a swarm of changes. From one millenial blink to the next, God would see an altered world.

The old Psalmist knew what he was talking about when he said the hills skip like lambs. They do, only we're too quick-eyed to notice. In our hasty sight the rocks seem fixed. If we were to crawl onto the other side of that comparison and watch events from the rocks' point of view, all of human history, from the stalking of woolly mammoths to the launching of space shuttles, would appear like a blinding flash. Our longest running shows, such as China, are mere buzzings in the ears of stones. Babylon, Rome, New York: snap, crackle, pop. When we disappear, we probably will carry a good many other animals and plants down to extinction with us. But rocks won't keep much record of our brief transit. For all our drilling and blasting, we have barely scratched this stony planet. I find that a comfort.

There is nothing like geology to take the urgency out of the morning's news. People whose blood pressure goes up and down with the stock market would do well to visit a stone outcropping in their neighborhood. I don't care a nickel's-worth about the fortunes of Wall Street, but I do get sorely vexed by the news. So when reports of war and pollution and hunger begin to smother me, I go hunt rock.

In my region of southern Indiana the chief rock is limestone, one of the commonest on earth and the one that wears the shapes of time most handsomely. Like all limestone, this local stuff is a cake of corpses, a hardened graveyard of sea creatures. In the warm, shallow oceans that used to cover the Midwest, invertebrate fauna thrived. As they died, their shells settled to the bottom, where currents slowly wore them to bits and sorted the bits according to size. Chemicals leaching down from the water gradually cemented these scraps of shell together into thick beds, like a giant layer cake. The earth-shrug that heaved up the Appalachian Mountains elevated these beds above sea-level, tilting them so that a series of progressively older layers were exposed to the weather and to curious ramblers. If you hike from west to east across southern Indiana, you will traverse belt after belt of limestone, ranging in age from about three hundred to about five hundred million years. There are places where you can leap from one outcropping to another and cross a gulf of a thousand centuries.

My own neighborhood limestone, called Salem, was laid down roughly 345 million years ago, around the time the sharks were getting their start, a little before the arrival of cockroaches, long before the appearance of anything vaguely resembling a mammal. The Salem outcrop, which extends in a ragged fifteen-mile wide belt northward from the Ohio River past Bedford and Bloomington, is the largest accessible deposit of premium building limestone in the United States, and quite possibly the largest in the world. No matter where you live in America, you are probably within walking distance of a library, bank, factory, church, house or skyscraper built with Salem limestone. Chunks of southern Indiana have been shipped all over the country.

Within a few miles of where I sit in Bloomington, there are gaping holes in the earth from which the stone was dug for Rockefeller Center, the Pentagon, the Empire State Building, Washington Cathedral, Grand Central Station, San Francisco's City Hall, Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, Philadelphia's public library, Vanderbilt mansions, half a dozen state capitols, and for hundreds of other buildings grand or humble. Walk to your town square or to the lawn of the nearest courthouse: chances are you'll find a war memorial carved from Indiana limestone. One you've surely seen in pictures is the statue of marines hoisting the stars and stripes over Iwo Jima. The Bureau of Internal Revenue toils through its endless piles of forms behind sturdy walls of Salem stone, and so do the Departments of State and Commerce, the U.S. Postal Service, as well as a good many other bureaucracies too numerous and disheartening to mention. In fact, roughly three-quarters of all the cut stone ever quarried in America was dug in this region, a region so small you can hike it from side to side or bicycle it from end to end in a single day. Digging up that much stone has left a good many holes hereabouts.

I never tire of going out to look at these quarries. Some of them are a century old, barely discernible through the vines and trees, as overgrown as the ruins of Maya temples. Some are brand new. My favorite season for exploring is right now, midsummer, when the tough open field wildflowers that crowd the stone lips are at their brightest: the intense orange of butterfly-weed, the white tracery of Queen Anne's lace, pink everlasting pea, purple Joe-Pye-weed, red clover and bull thistles, violet garden phlox, lavender vetch, blue chicory. They make quite a show at the end of July, a garden no one plants and no one weeds. The high summer sun also deepens the green of the water that fills many of the old quarries. On the topographic maps, these wet holes appear like a scatter of rectangular pits, as if the land had been scarred by smallpox. Following the maps, I hike across green fields and stare over the edge into these green pools, field blurring into quarry. Algae bloom down there like brown clouds, confusing the issue. Sky and underearth meet on this shimmering surface.

Swimmers are lured by the hundreds to these wet quarries, especially in July's dog days. Afraid of stony silence, they come with radios. To domesticate the raw pits, they bring air mattresses, coolers of beer, footballs, sacks of store food; they park their cars and motorcycles and pickups within easy reach, ready for getaway, like cowboys afraid to lose sight of their horses. They do all they can to turn the quarries into backyard swimming pools. And almost every summer a few of them are hurt or killed. Diving from the ledges, a man cracks his skull on rubble hidden beneath the soupy surface. A girl paddles into the mouth of an underwater cave, and never paddles out. Grabbing a dangling wire, perhaps thinking to swing out over the water and play Jane of the jungle, a woman is electrocuted. A boy, while frog-kicking along the bottom, gets caught in the submerged skeleton of an old derrick. The owners post warnings. The sheriff's men make raids, sometimes arresting the swimmers by dozens; but they do so with half a heart, because most of the sheriff's men, when boys, swam in these same treacherous pits.

The quarries will not be easily domesticated. They are not backyard pools; they are battlefields. Each quarry is an arena where violent struggles took place between machines and planet, between human ingenuity and brute resisting stone, between mind and matter. Waste rock litters the floor and brim like rubble in a bombed city. The ragged pits might have been the basements of vanished skyscrapers. Stones weighing tens of tons lean against one another at precarious angles, as if they have been thrown there by some gigantic strength and have not yet finished falling. Wrecked machinery hulks in the weeds, grimly rusting, the cogs and wheels, twisted rails, battered engine housings, trackless bulldozers and burst boilers like junk from an armored regiment. Everywhere the ledges are scarred from drills, as if from an artillery barrage or machine-gun strafing. Stumbling onto one of these abandoned quarries and gazing at the ruins, you might be left wondering who had won the battle, men or stone.

In a working quarry, where the battle is raging right before your eyes, the outcome is no more certain. The pit is choked with steam and smoke. There is a fearful racket of growling engines, air-hammers, pneumatic drills, men's voices shouting orders, saws whining, slabs of stone heaving enormously on the cables of derricks. This is no place for the faint of heart. Much as I hate to portray our dealings with the earth as one of open warfare, I can think of no more honest way to describe this scene. Quarrying, like all mining, is brutal. You are ripping into the crust of the earth, tearing hunks of it loose, and shipping those spoils away. You cannot do so gently. And who wins the battle? The machinery is powerful and the men highly skilled, but the limestone resists stubbornly, with its passive weight and also with its hidden flaws—its fissures and color changes, its mud-filled caverns and pockets of coarse fossils—flaws that render much of the stone unsaleable and so render the labor fruitless, a kind of defeat. The quarriers are not often braggarts, as some operators of heavy machinery tend to be. Their works are mighty by human reckoning, but measly on a planetary scale. They know that beneath their deepest digging the rock goes down and down, and that even this unyielding shell is but a thin skin around the earth's fiery core.

Although the steels are harder now and the motors stronger, the methods of quarrying have not changed fundamentally since the nineteenth century. First a promising location must be found. This is a tricky job, two-thirds science and one-third hunch. While there is limestone everywhere in this vicinity, it may be covered beneath too much dirt, or lie in beds too thin, or suffer too badly from water damage to be suitable for quarrying. The experts look at outcrops and study core drillings; but in the end, like psychoanalysts probing the unconscious, they must guess what lies hidden underground. Opening a new quarry is always a gamble, and often it fails. Many a man went bankrupt from digging in a bad spot.

Once the place is chosen, the overburden of soil and gravel and weathered rock must be stripped away. In the early days this was accomplished by pick and shovel, horse-drawn scraper, and an occasional charge of black powder. But explosives have never been of much use, since they often shatter the underlying stone, thereby spoiling the bed. Human and horse muscle gave way, late in the nineteenth century, to steam-powered shovels and high-pressure water hoses, which have been replaced in turn by bulldozers and back-hoes and dump trucks.

Dealing with the stone itself involves a whole new set of machines. Great mobile engines called channelers, powered by steam or electricity, chug on rails from one side of the bed to the other, chiseling ten-foot-deep slots. Hammering and puffing along, they look and sound and smell like small locomotives. By shifting rails, the quarriers eventually slice the bed into a grid of blocks. The first of these to be removed is called the keyblock, and it always provokes a higher than usual proportion of curses. There is no way to get to the base of this first block to cut it loose, so it must be wedged, hacked, splintered and worried at, until something like a clean hole has been excavated. Men can then climb down and, by drilling holes and driving wedges, split the neighboring block free at its base, undoing in an hour a three-hundred-million-year-old cement job.

If a loosened block is small, it is hoisted out by derrick. If very large (some of them weigh 250 tons), it is first tugged over onto its side, the massive fall cushioned by pillows of loose rock, and then it is split into mill-sized blocks. The flawed stones, not suitable for use at the moment but possibly salvageable in the future, are stacked in piles called grout. The random waste, called spawls, is heaped wherever there's room. The good stones are loaded onto trucks or rail cars for hauling to the mill, or stacked beside the hole for seasoning.

Of all the quarrying machines, my favorites are the cranes and derricks. Bulldozers are commonplace. You can see them nosing around any day of the week, in any township. The channelers are unique to the quarries, but they seem plodding, dim-witted, like anything that shuffles back and forth in a rut. The pneumatic drills are versatile but puny, almost comical in their rattling assaults upon the bedrock. They remind me of Joseph Conrad's account of French gunships firing salvos into Africa. Pow, pow, surrender. No, give me the derricks. They are the first things you see as you approach a cluster of quarries, the upright beams thrusting skyward like the masts of a fleet at anchor. Guy wires, slanting down from the tops of these masts to bolts embedded in rock, hold them in place. These webs of cable make me think of carnivals and circuses, as if roustabouts might hang a tent or a Ferris wheel on each of the brawny poles. By means of a second beam, hinged at the base of the upright one and controlled by winches, the derrick can sweep out a circle a hundred feet in diameter, and heft the many-ton stones as if they were children's building blocks. After the chisels and drills have finished their brute work, the derricks perform the delicate business. They dance the great blocks through the air on hooks and cables, huge boxy fish tugged from antique seas and cast up on dry land. A glimpse of those limestone leviathans sailing through the air on threads of steel is reason enough for admiring derricks.

And so the quarriers work across the bed, wedging and splitting, hoisting and hauling, until an entire layer of stone has been removed. Work then resumes with the channeler, another depth of ten feet or so is carved out, another and another, on down level by level until the usable stone has been exhausted. Since the Salem deposit is typically forty to seventy feet thick, most quarries are between four and seven floors deep. Each floor is marked by a narrow ledge, for on each new level the channeler must start its cut about a foot or two further in from the existing wall. Chiseled down far enough into the bedrock, these stairstepped walls would draw nearer and nearer to one another and eventually meet. If you greased that abysmal pit, poured it full of plaster, then pulled the hardened plaster out and set it with the point sticking up, you would have a titanic pyramid.

You might well have no use for a pyramid. But the ancient Egyptians did, and they built theirs out of limestone. There's a pyramid going up right now just south of here, near Oolitic, in the heart of the quarry district. The promoters say they want to call attention to the virtues of Salem limestone. "It's durable," announce the brochures, "it's beautiful, and it's natural. The material for the ages." Every now and again the national news media pick up this story and have a romp with it: Look at these crazy Hoosiers building the Pyramid! I think it's a good deal less crazy than building the Pentagon. Once the monument is completed at Oolitic, nobody will crawl inside it and plan our extermination. Nobody will demand half our taxes to feed it. No protesters will ever have call to wail or weep on its steps. It seems to me entirely reasonable that people who live near a quarry should decide to raise a pyramid. One is the negative image of the other; the stairstepped pile of stone above ground mimics the stairstepped hole below.

On my bicycle I follow a truckload of biscuit-colored blocks to Woolery Stone Mill. Jack Rogers, who is the third in a line of fathers and sons to manage the place, shows me around. He is fiftyish, stocky, with thinning brown hair and metal-framed glasses, soft-voiced and melancholy, like a discouraged priest. And the mill he shows me through is like a cathedral, enormous vaulted ceiling held up by steel girders, light streaming through high clerestory windows, and stone everywhere. "Back in the heyday of limestone, thirty years ago," says Rogers, "they just kept adding onto this place, building it bigger and bigger. Now, with business so far down, we don't need all the room." So many pews, and a dwindling congregation.

Everything is white from limestone dust, as if a fresh snow has fallen. Motes hang in the air. I worry about the lungs of stonecutters. Near each work station there is a potbellied stove, idle now in summer, but fierce with coal fires in winter. As in most factories, there is a sound of motors keening and belts rumbling. But the ground-note of metal rasping against stone is peculiar to such mills, a watery grating as of creeks over gravel. The smell is also distinctive, calling to mind tidal beaches, damp sand, river deltas.

It is a male preserve. Only men cut the stone, as only men quarry it. In some mills, even the clerks and secretaries are male. No one can explain to me why this is so. Women could certainly handle the machinery as well as men. Perhaps those who wrestle with stone imagine it to be female, the flesh of Mother Earth. Or perhaps men keep this work to themselves simply because it is dangerous and dirty. Whatever the reason, here at Woolery Mill women appear only in pin-ups tacked to the wall, as passive as the waiting stones.

A quarry block is first trundled under a gang-saw, a set of parallel blades resembling the ones that lumbermen once used for cross-cutting, and here the block is sliced into slabs. The slabs may then be cut to size for lintels or sills or some other use on diamond-tipped circular saws, or they may be shaped into arches and moldings on a planer, or turned into columns on a lathe, or carved into filigree with pneumatic chisels. Traveling cranes, riding I-beams overhead, dandle the pieces from tool to tool.

The machines are built on a scale for giants. The normal-sized men who run them are mostly sons and grandsons of stonecutters. Their ancestors moved into this region from Tennessee and North Carolina and Kentucky, or emigrated here from Italy, from Austria, from Yugoslavia. In the early days the owners sometimes imported foreign workers to break up strikes. Many of these men stayed, joined the union, and went out on strike in their own good time. "It seems like people in the stone industry never believe they've got a fair contract unless they go out," Rogers explains to me. The work has always been precarious, boom and bust, nowadays mainly bust, with the building industry sickly and what little building that goes on relying upon steel and glass and concrete instead of stone. Even in fat times the work was never secure. Prosperity enabled the owners to buy improved machines, stronger ones and faster, and each mechanical advance reduced the need for men. The Woolery stonecutters look up as we pass by, snap jokes at us, the creases about their eyes white with powdered fossils. They are themselves a vanishing species.

I linger longest beside the carvers, the aristocrats of the stone trade. They are old men, mostly, with powerful hands and forearms. Working on blocks that have been sawed and planed to the rough dimensions of the job, they carve with air-powered chisels, fashioning gargoyles and ivy, sculpting the statues of a bishop or a rhinoceros. The sound they make is of a hundred ferocious woodpeckers. The dust disguises their clothes and turns them into ghosts. If they were to put down their air-hoses and pick up hammers and chisels, they could easily be at work on the Louvre, the Alhambra, or the Parthenon. It is an ancient art, hand and eye coaxing shapes from rocks.

At every stop in our tour through the mill, Rogers brushes his fingers over the stone, a stroke of familiarity and affection, as a farmer goes among the beasts in his barn. He touches the pieces of various jobs: the balusters and stairs for the mansion of an Arabian prince in Virginia, panels for a Texas bank, foundation blocks for a Philadelphia synagogue, tower decorations for a college in Missouri, an abstract sculpture for a local restaurant. He also touches the rejected stones. Like a farmer reading the condition of his cows, he can read the faults and strengths of each piece with a quick glance. "These black wiggly lines are called crowfeet," he says, fingering a slab in the waste bin. "They'll ruin a stone. And so will these cracks here from cross-bedding, and this change in grain from coarse to fine. The coarsest stuff we call gothic, like this here, with fossils in it as big as dimes, and little air pockets to give it texture. That's my favorite limestone; but you can't sell it to people. They take a look at those shells and get nervous. But it's just as durable as the finest-grained stone."

For my money, I tell him, the bigger the fossils the better. When I leave the mill, he gives me a rectangular slice of the gothic grade, about the size of a piece of bread. As soon as I get outside in the sunlight I lay my present on the grass and lay me belly-down to study it. Spirals, webs, curlicues, ringlets: it's a fruitcake of fossils. It's all the shapes of a galaxy shrunken to fit my hand. Comets, meteors. As many creatures went to make up this handful of stone as there are stars in the Milky Way. The rectangle becomes a door. If I stare at it long enough, it will open. If I stare until the mammoth scale of the ordinary lets go its grip on my mind, I will become small enough to swim through these microscopic nebulae.

I am still lying there on the grass outside the mill when a klaxon sounds the end of shift. Stonecutters troop past me with lunch pails clunking against their thighs.

"You okay, buddy?" says a nine-fingered sawyer.

"Fine," I answer, just fine, snagged there by the gravity of a hand-sized galaxy.

Like my mesmerizing gift of stone, the quarries are also doorways, opening down into elemental depths. They seem to inspire elementary passions in people, or to attract people whose primal urges have already been roused. I show you three brief scenes, all from my past month's rambles.

A red pickup truck, so heavily loaded that its rear bumper is nearly scraping the ground, backs to the edge of a roadside quarry. Two women hop out and peel a tarp away from the bulging cargo, which appears from where I sit to be a small household's worth of furniture. Judging by the angry conversation in which they engage while untying ropes, the two women are mother and daughter. The older one barks orders, the younger sullenly replies. The mother is somewhere in her mid-thirties, burly, as quick on her feet as a boxer, hair rolled up in a brown beehive. The daughter is in her middle teens, skinny, languid, face shadowed and hair hidden beneath a railroad engineer's cap. When the last rope is undone, the mother seizes an arm chair and heaves it over the bank of the quarry. "I'll teach that goddamn son of a bitch!" she yells. She keeps on yelling about a man whom she never names as she throws stools, lamps, tables, cardboard boxes stuffed with clothes, everything over the side. The stuff lands with a sploosh or a muffled thud, depending on whether it hits water or stone. Every now and again the woman hollers at the girl to help, but the daughter hangs back, hands stuffed in jeans, face tight.

"He can't treat me that way!" shouts the mother. Over goes a small television, the drawers of a flimsy dresser, a pair of chrome-bodied kitchen chairs. "Get your hands out of your pockets and help me," the mother cries as she wrestles with a couch. The daughter does not stir. The couch goes over anyway, and after it go mattress, bedstead, rolled carpet, a Sears catalogue, armfuls of paper, a shotgun.

Eventually the truck is empty. The mother has never ceased yelling at some absent and beastly man. The daughter has never budged from her sullen pose. I have watched it all from thirty feet away, squatting in the sun beside my parked bicycle, and all the while neither woman has taken any notice of me. Then as she slams the tailgate, the mother gives me a glower. "And you can go to hell!" she hollers. I sit tight, mum, not wanting to join that other man's household goods down in the bottom of the quarry. The pickup peels gravel when it leaves.

Another day, and in another quarry, I am sitting on the steps of a caboose. When this pit was yielding up stone, the caboose served as foreman's office. Now it serves me handsomely as a perch, from which I can study the darkness thickening among the limestone ledges. A shadowy figure breaks the skyline and walks past me to the lip of the quarry. It is a man, rather stooped, and he carries something rolled up in his hand; I can make out nothing more definite in the darkness. There is the click and flare of a lighter. In a moment, whatever the man is grasping in his hand becomes a torch. He holds it upright near his eyes, watching it burn, his old man's face solemn and impassive. Is it a will? I wonder. A marriage license? love letter? poem? And why does he bring it here, instead of burning it in the fireplace at home, or in his driveway? When the flames are guttering down near his fist, he drops the burning paper onto the stone. In a slow shuffle he circles the fire—once, twice, three times. On each drowsy orbit his cratered face waxes and wanes, moonlike, in the reflected light. It is a primordial dance I am watching, a banishing of some evil. Whatever the source of his dread, it required this stony place for its exorcism. After the last spark winks out, I hear his shuffling steps go by the caboose, almost near enough for me to reach out from my cloak of invisibility and touch him.

In the third and last of these little passion plays I feel, instead of anger or curiosity, fear. I am planted like a seed in a waterworn cranny high in the wall of Maple Hill quarry. A red-tailed hawk circles in lazy loops overhead, waiting for anything with blood in it to show itself on the bare stone. An old wooden water tower, held together by rusting steel bands, leaks a constant stream onto the ground nearby. I am speculating how this supply of water could be renewed, when up pulls a van. On the side visible to me a desert sunset has been painted in Day-Glo colors. Three men clamber out, all in baseball caps, all a bit loose in the joints of the legs, each with a can of beer clamped in his fist. One of them catches my eye in particular, for he is extraordinarily fat above the waist and scrawny below, like a keg balanced on a sawhorse, and he wears the sort of belly-length tear-away T-shirt favored by svelte tailbacks.

This one leads the way to the quarry lip, just around the corner from the niche where I am planted. He jams the beerless hand into his pocket and draws out a revolver. Bam bam bam. He fires down into the water—at no particular target, so far as I can tell from the scatter of splashes, but just randomly. His two buddies also tug handguns from pockets and begin pumping lead into the green pool. The noise hammers around in the quarry like a maniac in a padded cell. Maybe they're aiming at the fish (how do these fish *get* here?), which veer in silver bursts, scaly sides catching the light like a slant of wind-driven sleet.

The trio empty their guns, reload, empty them again, three times, and on the fourth round they begin firing at the limestone walls. They laugh, hearing the bullets zing and ricochet. I am not laughing. I have crawled so far back into my cranny that it will take a good lubrication of sweat, which I have, to get me out again. They might kill me by accident. But they might also, I am convinced, kill me on purpose. It would seem more in keeping with their helter-skelter mayhem to shoot me than not to, and nobody could ever know they did it. I keep well hidden. A quarry in a quarry. Except for their laughter, not a sound emerges from their throats. They speak only in bullets.

By and by the shooting stops, the van's motor starts, the tires crunch away. I am a long time in coming forth.

Wherever holes have been drilled in the quarry ledges, dirt catches and seedlings take root. Eventually these roots will burst the stone. Our roots also go down into rock—the rock of caves, spearheads, knives, the megaliths and cairns and dolmens of our ancestors, the rock of temples and pyramids, gravestones, cathedrals. Entire millenia of human labors are known to us solely through their stone leavings. The only common stuff that rivals it for durability is language, words laid down in books and scrolls like so many fossils. With a touch of mind, the fossil words spring to life; so might the stones, if we look at them aright.

While you read this, new limestone is forming on the seafloor near the Bahamas, grain by grain, corpse by corpse. You could dive down and grab it by the fistful, freshly made. It's also dissolving away right this moment down in hidden caverns beneath my feet. As W.H. Auden wrote in a poem about the limestone countryside of his native Yorkshire,

> If it form the one landscape that we the inconstant ones
> Are consistently homesick for, this is chiefly
> Because it dissolves in water.

The waters make it, and waters unmake it. Rain seeks out every fault, scours passage through every fracture, opening tunnels and sinkholes, underground rivers and sudden gurgling springs. Beneath the sunlit quarries, there is a sunless warren of caves. I loiter outside these jagged doorways to the underworld, knowing I must go down there next in my search for stone. *–Scott Sanders*

DAVID WEISS

AGAINST PROPHECY

At night my wife turns to the wall troubled by death.
I say silly, joking things that do not comfort her
and go out closing the door and darkness in.

Rain drums down as it has for days.
I watch it run to the tips of palm leaves
where the drops pause to gather mass before falling.

Since we too pause, before falling, and gather mass,
the idea of not-being repels my wife's imagination
with its nothing-to-imagine.
Worse than the thought of being buried alive.

There is comfort in words like *millenium* and *messiah*
spoken last night by three rabbis in Jerusalem: news was
each dreamed the same dream that the end of the world is near.

I heard this while scraping spots of red and green paint
from the formica top of a desk purchased secondhand.
I felt, then, a need to love or defend the useless attention

I was giving to make its shabby surface uniformly white again.
Indifferent to prophecy, the refrigerator drones in the dark
like a common prayer. It keeps milk fresh, a principle

by which we abide as surely as we do the return of light.
My wife is sleeping when I slip into bed. Her eyelid
scratches the pillow secretly as a leaf trembling

in a breeze so slight that if you wet a finger
and held it to the air, still you could not tell
which direction it was coming from.

A Literary Life in Indiana

When our telephone in Bloomington, Indiana, rings at an unreasonable hour, the caller is usually either a university student who has not yet mastered the complexities of the dial system or a fellow-Bloomingtonian who shouts into the phone angrily, "Vergil?" or "Cletis?" or "Denzil?" and wants to argue when he is told that he has the wrong number. Consequently, I was taken by surprise one morning at seven o'clock when a lady asked for me on the telephone by my full name, complete with middle initial and with the supererogation of a "Doctor" up front.

The lady said she was calling from Indianapolis. She and two other ladies wanted to stop and see me on their way downstate. She told me someone had given them my name and they would like to discuss with me their search for a play about Lincoln's "formative years." They would be in Bloomington in about an hour.

I should have said no. I am not at my best socially at eight o'clock in the morning; my day's work would be interrupted; and the lady's tone in speaking about Abe's "formative years" boded ill. I had heard it before. Everyone who admires Lincoln becomes possessive about him, I have noticed, in one way or another. I, for example, was born on Abe's birthday, and it used to give me great pleasure when they closed the banks on February 12 before they began telescoping national holidays so that now it is difficult to tell Christmas from the Fourth of July if you don't notice the weather.

While I can not honestly say that the lady in Indianapolis called herself and her companions "friends of Abe Lincoln," she gave that impression. In fact, she made it sound as if they were Abe's own kin. Her voice was intimate, in a family sort of way, defensive, belligerent almost, as if Abe and his Pa and Ma and Cousin Dennis Hanks were poor relations and she dared me to say a disparaging word about any of them.

As if I would!

I once wrote a novel about Lincoln's youth in southern Indiana, *Abe Lincoln of Pigeon Creek*, that attests to my admiration for him. But I portrayed him and his folks as human beings, and I soon learned that admiration for the Hoosier canonicate that falls short of downright adulation is unacceptable in this state. A father in Fort Wayne wrote to me regarding that book that when he discovered I had quoted Abe's own mildly bawdy verses, "The Chronicles of Reuben," he had taken it away from his fifteen-year-old son and would try to have it removed from the shelves of the public library. Hoosier heroes are a subject to shy away from in Indiana, like religion, politics, and what to do with okra.

Take, as a further example, *The Angel and the Serpent*, a book of mine about New Harmony, a village on the Wabash that lately has been a-buzz building a Williamsburg front to hide its once-charming shantyboat behind. Robert Owen, the Welsh reformer, bought the village ready-made from a flock of pious Germans in the early 1800s to create what he called a "Community of Equality" that excluded black people. I must have said something in that book that offended somebody in New Harmony, because it has been banned from the local bookstore for twenty years.

Or consider another ossuary of our state, Vincennes, which George Rogers Clark captured from the British in the American Revolution. I lectured in that town one night on a few hours' notice when the scheduled speaker for the first annual banquet of the Vincennes Historical Society came down with acute appendicitis. In return for making a last-minute, seventy-mile drive from Bloomington in a snowstorm, the treasurer of the society, a local newspaper editor, promised me a fee of $35, plus the usual fried-chicken-and-apple-pie dinner and a night's lodging in a local motel. I ate the dinner and spent the night, but when my check came in the mail it was for $18.50, with an explanation from the newspaper editor that he was deducting from my fee the $16.50 that the motel had charged for "the unauthorized *second* night" I had stayed in Vincennes. As a further insult, he enclosed a scurrilous poem about me that a local librarian had written, *ex officio*, I suppose, as the society's secretary. Since I can not imagine anyone really believing someone had spent two nights in Vincennes when he was required to spend only one, I can only assume that I must have said something about George Rogers Clark that these two local patriots did not like. Or maybe I failed to give equal time to their city's other hero: Red Skelton.

I seem to have a habit of leaving a fly in the ointment of local history that brings me the reward of false accusations and contumely. For years a gentleman in Terre Haute wrote me testy letters because I said in my book *The Wabash* that some residents of the city call it "Terry Hut." In that same book I said that Theodore Dreiser wrote the chorus and several verses of his brother Paul Dresser's famous song "On the Banks of the Wabash," and for thus attributing our state anthem's words to Dreiser I was excoriated by an editorial in *The Indianapolis Star*, which is published in the capital of our Hoosier garth, *not* on the banks of the Wabash but astride Pogue's Run. The editorial toploftily dismissed me as "a downstate schoolmaster" (which, at that time, I never had been) who, even so, should have known better than to take Theodore Dreiser's own published word for the authorship—which I still don't. Know better, I mean.

Once, in the 1960s, I was told that Governor Roger Branigan had said my historical writings about Indiana were too readable to be trusted. I think the Governor was at that time under the influence of a Hoosier history professor who believes that the only good history is a deadly history and has spent his life trying to prove it. Such academians, when they review my books in academic journals, often point out, askance, that I am a novelist as well as a historian.

The life of a regionalist anywhere, I suppose, is not a happy one, and a number of years ago I gave up my own parochial Hoosier interests for less hazardous literary pursuits. But not before I wrote a three-act play about Abe Lincoln's fourteen years in Indiana, from 1816 to 1830. That play, published in Kentucky, has had a modest success outside Indiana, even winning a couple of prizes in its heyday, although it never got closer to Broadway than the York Little Theatre of York, Pa. So, I must confess, when I told the lady on the telephone she could stop by with her friends, I had an ulterior and not altogether altruistic motive. That old Lincoln play was shuffled somewhere among the books and papers in my study, and maybe it was just the thing the ladies were looking for.

Shortly after eight o'clock, they were at my door, all smartly dressed. None, I think, was actually wearing a hat, but all looked as if they were, possibly because they all had new permanents, which make women's hair look as if it has no permanent relation to their heads. The most formidable, a jaunty, four-square, no-nonsense type, was obviously the self-appointed spokeslady of the group. "Dr. Wilson," she was saying, before she stepped inside, "we need a musical play like the one about 'My Old Kentucky Home' down in Bardstown."

That ruled out my modest production at once. But it also ruled out Abe Lincoln for the lead role, because Abe could never carry a tune in his high, squeaky voice. In his Hoosier logcabin days, when he entertained his sister Sally by trying to sing, "The turbaned Turk who scorns the world and struts about with his whiskers curled," Sally laughed less at the words than at his efforts to stay on key.

My wife had made a pitcher of iced tea and set out a plate of cookies before she left the house in advance of my callers' arrival, and half of these refreshments were consumed before I discovered why, in spite of the flurry of feminine chatter in our living room, there was a certain constraint among the ladies whenever they addressed me directly. They looked at me then as if I really wasn't there, or oughtn't to be. I got the impression that they thought they were victims of a hoax.

Finally, the truth came out. My visitors believed they were calling on a William E. Wilson who had been the State Superintendent of Education for numerous elected terms, and I did not live up to their expectations. I can still relapse into the Hoosier accent when I have a mind to, but I do not speak the lingo of an "educationist," and when they asked me about textbooks dealing with Abraham Lincoln used in our public schools I displayed an ignorance that must have baffled them.

It was a natural mistake for the ladies to make. When the other William E. Wilson died a few years ago, the Louisville *Courier-Journal* published my obituary instead of his. The late WEW himself may have contributed to this confusion because when I first met him years ago he told me that at the beginning of his political career he was often mistaken for my father, who bore the same name and was a Member of Congress from Indiana in the 1920s. "Then *you* came along!" the Superintendent of Education said. "Soon after you began to appear in print, I got tired of disclaiming the authorship of your books and accepted any praise for them that came my way. I said I did not write them only when people disliked them."

Be that as it may, when I wrote to the *Courier-Journal* questioning the accuracy of their account of my death, they graciously admitted that they were wrong and published a "correction"; and I have enjoyed reasonably good health ever since. But newspapers' "corrections" often confirm their initial errors in hasty readers' minds, and I think the ladies believed it was I who was dead and not the other WEW when they came to visit me.

When I tried to explain the mixup, they all murmured condolences. To the end, they remained vague about who I was—or had been—although one of them did say politely that she thought she had seen my name on a book once and did my middle initial, by any chance, stand for "Edmund"? It turned out later that all three of them had read my *Abe Lincoln of Pigeon Creek* but had failed to notice the name of the author.

My ladies, however, had come to talk about the "musical" they hoped to produce and they were soon at it again, with no further concern for who was who, living or dead. In the wink of an eye, the spokeslady popped out of the house to their car and back in again, and a montage of cardboard, some four feet high and six feet long was installed in our livingroom and I found myself being asked to admire it at the same time that they expected me to read the mimeographed sheets and brochures they piled on my lap.

Their free-standing poster, composed of five or six layers of "perspective," depicted the Lincoln cabin in Spencer County with a tired-looking Tom Lincoln and a shadowy Nancy Hanks Lincoln or Sarah Bush Lincoln in the doorway behind him while, out front, Abe himself, barefooted and highwater pants hitched by a single gallus, stood at the ready in the yard with a book in one hand and an ax in the other.

"That pore boy!" I thought. "The way folks remember him 'round here, he never had no fun at all, not drinkin' because he couldn't stand the taste of ten-rod whiskey, ner smokin', ner chawin', ner cussin', ner dancin', ner nothin' that had any real git-up-and-go skylarkin' to it, but all the time splittin' rails with that tarnal ax of his'n er studyin' lawbooks in a bad readin' light and thinkin' up things to say that an eternity of after-dinner speakers could quote and git laughs outen!"

Aloud, I said, "It's pretty."

Still expecting me to read the "material" in my lap and, from time to time, leaping across the room to point out that I was looking at something upside-down, the spokeslady dramatically outlined the plot of the opus they required.

"I can see and hear it now," she said. "It will open with the Lincolns arriving from Kentucky in their wagon . . ."

I did not remind her that they crossed the Ohio River on a ferry scow with all their worldly goods, called "plunder" in those days, slung over the back of a single horse. There was no wagon, and Nancy and Abe and Abe's sister Sally had little opportunity to ride the horse because they had to help Tom Lincoln and Dennis Hanks hack a path through the spicewood and sumac and matted grapevines with knives and axes almost every inch of the way.

The spokeslady made a cradle of her arms and began to rock back and forth on our sofa.

". . . with little Abe in Nancy's arms on the front seat . . ."

"Little Abe" was seven years old in 1816 and big for his age. I pictured his long legs dangling out of the imagined "wagon" in the underbrush.

". . . while Nancy sings 'My Old Kentucky Home' to him as an opener."

A real "opener" that would be! I thought. An eye-opener! After they left, I looked it up and found, as I suspected, that Stephen Foster composed his famous song forty years after the Lincolns came to Indiana. Lincoln had sons of his own to sing to by that time, if he could.

When the spokeslady got the Lincolns settled in a cabin and had cleared the forest roundabout and I was beginning to suspect Ann Rutledge of hovering in the wings, although she lived a couple of hundred miles away in Illinois, if indeed she was yet born, I applied myself to the heap in my lap and came up with a means of bringing an end to the drama taking place in my livingroom.

"May I join?" I said, interrupting the performer before she had a chance to set the *Gettysburg Address* to music.

In my hand I held an application blank for membership in a Lincoln society the ladies were organizing. The fee was twenty-five dollars, but it would be worth it.

"I'll go get my checkbook," I said, and left the room.

When I returned, the Lincoln cabin and clearing done in three-dimensional cardboard had vanished, and my visitors were ready to depart as soon as they had my check in hand.

In a little while, my wife came home and found me exhausted on the sofa that had not long before been the front seat of the Lincolns' "wagon."

"Are they going to use your play?" she asked.

"I forgot to mention it," I said, and closed my eyes again, wondering, curmudgeon that I am, whether I could deduct the twenty-five bucks from my income tax.

Still and all, as we say here, hard as the literary life may be, I do believe I'd rather live in Indiana than in New York City, say, or one of those places. *—William E. Wilson*

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LORRIE GOLDENSOHN

TWO POEMS

CLYTIE

Sunflower Clytie at the feminist party,
head swivelling after the two
male heads in the room, still
in the full flow of your harangue
affirming sisterhood,
the active jet of your black eyes
restlessly seeking their confirmation:

It's not that you want their sex.
Thighs pulled into order by the cloth-covered
but unmistakably convex bump of the crotch:
it's just a signet. They have the power and you
still turn to it, turn with it, Clytie,
calling them by the harsh, didactic
wind in which your body vibrates:
                                                                  I was always
a plain and earnest bulk in the kitchen,
turned to the kettle by the sink;
for supper, papa had to be ambushed,
blown out from behind the newspaper,
my little brother always usurping my place
in the order of the ages, while mama,
standing, adminstered the soup—
and I was never beautiful.
Only with the tumbling, boiling words could I
bring them around, four
chairs around the table,
two of them empty, could I
swing their faces in the circle of my mouth.

THE SURVIVOR

It isn't my mother dazing here at the sink,
and staring beyond the white pitcher
my hands are soaping, it's me,
scaring myself with what it feels like
to be the only one left. All the ones
that cause a cramp in the heart,
as if the blood fell down momentarily,
and then recovered, gone—
you no longer in the bed beside me,
making those small strangling noises
which are for you the deep sounds of release, as you
trust yourself utterly to the bed,
arms and legs around your own one wife,
none like her, although you often
wish that this were not the case,
as daily we stiffen ourselves
around the burials and excisions of the will
that long love exacts from each of us
in its different ways.

As if I could scour death like a bad smell
out of the pot—as if the subject of the poem
were never elegy, only the blurred, expectant
fuzz around the mid-March dogwood limbs,
the timid violets hanging onto the sky's underbelly,
as sky lifts my head from the kitchen sink.
As if these days were not some
night-time hunter's dressing of the cut tree-limbs
above the dank trap dug in the ground:
as if our substance were timeless,
came not into its end, as properly speaking,
yearning and longing, to keep their form, should not.

The Art of the Story: 2.

Saint Augustine's Pigeon: The Selected Stories of Evan S. Connell. North Point Press. $8.50(paper)
The Death of Descartes, by David Bosworth. Pittsburgh. $9.95
Mourning Crazy Horse: Stories by Harold Jaffe. Fiction Collective. $5.95(paper)
Coming Close: A Novella and Three Stories by B.H. Friedman. Fiction Collective. $5.95(paper)

With few exceptions Evan Connell's stories behave like realistic fiction. Automobiles are automobiles and fallout shelters are fallout shelters. Human behavior, up to a point, is explainable, but it is this point (or these points) that lure Connell into writing in the first place and which call forth his best work. His typical story slowly acquires the dimension and force of symbolic narrative. Where, as in the first story, "Yellow Raft," we are looking at a rescue plane search for a downed pilot, it becomes gradually apparent that we are watching something much larger, a story having to do with human destructiveness and with its tragic relationship to impulses of compassion and survival. It is a story of very few images like a story told in a monotone. A fighter plane, during the Second World War, goes down in the ocean. The wounded pilot manages to get out of the plane and into his yellow raft. He fires some flares. A day or two passes. An amphibious rescue plane appears out of the sky. It sees the yellow raft, but there is no one in it. It circles for hours over large expanses of ocean. It finds nothing. It makes a final swoop down over the raft, and the rear gunner fires at it, sinking it. The third person narration keeps us at a great distance from any of the people in the story. We never see or hear any of the people in the plane. The sense of distance and impersonality, not just between people but between people and the universe, is immense. The empty ocean, the tiny yellow raft, the helpless rescue plane, none of these things avail in saving the downed pilot. Killing the raft, as it were, is the only gesture that produces definite results, a futile, destructive gesture by which, typically, our presence in the world seems asserted.

The usual world of these stories is post-war suburban America. In Connell's view that world must contend with forces it seeks to deny: restlessness, its own abundance, human irrationality, and cold war crises. Two sets of stories here look into suburban America, one involving J.D., a man who travels the world in search of the perfect cultural climate or artifact. His wanderings are an implicit denial of the suburbs, but in its place he puts only a pointless, arid seeking.

> He had tales of the Casbah in Tangiers and he had souvenirs from the ruins of Carthage. On his key chain was a fragment of polished stone . . . picked up from the hillside just beyond Tunis. And he spoke familiarly of the beauty of Istanbul, and of Giotto's tower, and the Seine, and the golden doors of Ghiberti. . . .

Like some character out of Henry James gone rancid with cultural awareness, J.D. seems a natural offspring—lonely and rebellious—of the world invented out of the great poverty of the Depression and the sudden affluence of the Second World War.

The other central character in Connell's drama of our immediate past is Muhlbach, the rationalist, the believer in solutions and order. He is no Prussian officer, but he does not understand the fears of his small son, Otto. He does not recognize appeals for affection. His son must go to bed. He must even go to bed on the night Muhlbach decides to sleep in his proudest creation, his own underground bomb shelter. Otto walks in the darkness out to the shelter and pleads with Muhlbach to come in. Muhlbach says no, that his son must return to bed. Later Muhlbach leaves the shelter and discovers that his son has stuffed a potato in the air vent. He is shocked that his son would think of killing him. We see the futility and selfishness of his hope to live through nuclear war as related to his inability to perceive his son's basic human needs.

Muhlbach manages to learn from his experiences. He weeps to think of anyone, not to mention his son, wishing him harm. In the last of his three stories here, the title story of the book, Muhlbach tries to exceed "the limits set for [his] nature," but in a different way. His wife is dead, the woman he seems to be in love with does not interest him, so he decides to exceed the bounds of his shy, orderly, safe, suburban routine, and venture into Manhattan in search of a prostitute. He runs into several kinds of seaminess and is finally saved great humiliation by a small one: a pigeon saves him from a "cauldron of unholy loves" by dropping its "liquescent thunder" on his hat.

> After this, what can befall a man? . . . I've hoped for what was never meant to happen. I have spent one whole night attempting to distort the truth which was born in me. Now I have learned.

Aside from engaging fundamental human issues, Connell writes prose that is both lucid and dense. Disturbing and compassionate, his stories are important for our time and place.

David Bosworth's *The Death of Descartes* is the first winner of the University of Pittsburgh Press's Drue Heinz Prize for short fiction. He, too, is interested in stories which explore large human issues, especially those not ever, or not easily, resolved. Typical of this is a story that concerns the parents of a child dying of incurable disease. Another story looks back on the upheavals of the sixties from the very different perspective of the late seventies and early eighties. The protagonist is still a mantra-chanting Bhuddist, "not yet aware that [he's] a brainwashed dupe of his Holiness," his ex-radical ex-wife is now a smartly-dressed businesswoman, his childhood friend is a Vietnam MIA, and his father has just died of cancer. At the latter's funeral, these disparate elements meet, and the protagonist asks where things went wrong. His ex-wife gives the answer: "Dallas . . . Dealey Plaza, just beyond the School Book Depository." The story is very ambitious in its attempt to render our national experience of the sixties and seventies through the lives of four or five people typical of the time. The sense is, in fact, entirely the reverse of Evan Connell's fiction where what appears first, with peculiarity and completeness, are people, who later acquire general and symbolic properties. Bosworth's characters seem invented first to flesh out a complex story idea, and my problem with his fiction is that I am always aware of the way the human material is arranged to achieve the desired resonances. Things are too neat. The lives of ordinary people are asked to bear too much social and sociological weight.

The title story involves a death investigated as a homicide. Here coincidences pile on top of one another. The detective, whose wife has recently died, is dying himself from overwork and a weak heart. He has loved his work so well that the wife he loved felt neglected enough to have had a secret affair. He has clues to this which he pushes out of his mind. When he is called to investigate the death of a famous nuclear scientist, the only suspect for which is the scientist's wife, he persuades her to tell him a story that matches, point for point, the detective's wife's predicament. The detective, then, listens to his own wife's story of neglect spoken by a stranger. The circumstances of the scientist's death make it essentially accidental. He slipped and fell off a cliff. His wife was beside him. All she did was not reach out in what would have been a fruitless gesture. The detective, agent of the reason-seeking, guilt-determining, Cartesian law, must determine whether a crime has been committed. He goes home, thinks it through, and in a final dramatic gesture, burns his wife's letters and decides against the simple, rational needs and demands of the law that no demonstrable crime has been committed. The heart defeats the head, once again.

Bosworth's strengths are that he knows certain people well, that he has a sense of high purpose in fiction, and, when he is careful, that he writes an energetic prose. This is a good first book. But I find a number of stories marred by a too-clever plotting and by melodramatic excesses in the writing. The style rises occasionally to feats reminiscent of Faulkner, but it also produces passages like: "And love spills from his palm, an old man's affirmation, into the purging flames, the purifying ocean, from one moment to the next, from one frame to another, the miracle: life." This is trying too hard.

Harold Jaffe's *Mourning Crazy Horse* is a book of stories, but in the middle of it is a piece called "George Grosz" which is really an essay. I'm grateful for this essay, not just because it helps explain Jaffe's fiction, but also because it defends an esthetic stance perhaps necessary to any culture but certainly necessary to ours. It ends by quoting Brecht's poem, "To Those Born After":

> Hatred of baseness, too,
> Distorts one's features,
> Wrath against wrong, too,
> Makes one's voice hoarse. Alas,
> Though we wished to prepare the
>   ground
> for friendliness,
> We ourselves could not be friendly.
> But you when the time has come
> For man to be a helper to man,
> Remember us
> With consideration.

Jaffe speaks of Grosz's "line" and how it "frequently appeared uncontrolled, even deranged," and of his "extreme emotional state [which] possessed not only power but a peculiar dignity which resembled grace."

Both Grosz and Brecht, of course, committed themselves and their art to progressive political causes. Both were pre-eminently satirists. Both sought means of disrupting or disfiguring the real world in their art in an effort to represent it with emotional accuracy. They felt that a "normal" or realistic or rational ordering of events masked the fundamental and concealed abnormality and irrationality of human affairs.

Harold Jaffe has given his work, in *Mourning Crazy Horse*, to this general belief and this roughly approximated esthetic. His fiction revolves around the lives of people who are disfigured in one way or another. One of his recurring characters, Rosen, is a hunchback. Naturally, it is Rosen, the misfit, who is most humane in this otherwise exploitative and cruel world. Other characters include Cora Dance, a Black librarian, Nillson, a lonely Swedish immigrant, and Crazy Horse himself. Crazy Horse is an early victim of the American way of life, and as such, his experience typifies the experience of most of the characters in the book.

Not only are the characters of Jaffe's fiction disfigured by their experience, but his fictional forms are disfigured as well. He rarely tells a traditional story. He feels it necessary instead to mix narratives, sometimes with other narratives, sometimes with facts. It is as though Jaffe had decided that conventional narrative form could only conceal the truth he hopes to reveal. Brecht referred to this process as a strategy of alienation. He did not want the audience to empathize with characters on stage. He wanted them to stand at an emotional distance from them and think instead of the issues raised by the play. He wanted members of the audience to leave the theatre thinking about ways to resolve issues raised in his plays. The same is true of Jaffe.

These esthetic matters aside, Jaffe has produced a thoughtful and disturbing picture of our world by focusing principally—to use one of his titles—on its "underbelly." One could say that fiction has done this since the days of the "cony-catching pamphlet" or the rogue narratives of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, certainly since Defoe. Dickens rendered the lives of the London poor as vividly and as sympathetically as anyone. With Jaffe, however, we are not reveling in roguery, and we are not allowed, as in so much Victorian literature, to believe that the hearts of the poor and exploited remain untouched by their condition. Poverty disfigures. Exploitation kills the spirit.

One of the chief results of this view of experience is that Jaffe's characters are remote, even unappealing. They seem only half-engaged by life, or half-developed. The paradigm of this condition is presented in the book's first story, "Swede," where Rosen tries very hard to find out something about a man named Nillson who works out at the same gymnasium as he. Rosen follows him home in the rain one night, walking over a hundred blocks north through Manhattan into Harlem. Nillson climbs up onto the roof of a deserted apartment building to avoid Rosen and then apparently jumps into the East River. Rosen climbs down into the building and finds a room where Nillson had been living alone. In Nillson's briefcase he finds photos of him standing, hands down, glumly facing the camera, naked.

The Swede is a figure of abject loneliness, a human being stripped to essentials. He is so reduced by life

JOHN MORGAN

FOR THE YIDDISH POETS OF NEW YORK

All this insurmountable beauty
like that other East Side
to which we could never attain:
the day's sheen torn from the short
blue buildings beneath the el
while the present
chases its meaning in circles
like a Jew in pursuit of the sun.

Our fathers begin to shave and put on shorts:
America a blessing?
Fiery young ladies in shawls
peddle their singular products,
oh you hundred daughters waiting
with impudent dishrag smiles to become our mothers!

Few books are burnt, but the law
rotted with our names. So yesterday
when a parent lay dying we cursed him,
and now we stand beside the miraculous birth:
in a green luminescent theater, she
breaches like a white sea-beast,
an osprey flapping above her. . .

this is the conversion of the Jews.

that he flees from what at least starts as a simple gesture of interest and concern. One is reminded of Melville's Bartleby who "preferred not" to take steps, even the most minimal steps, to accommodate his employer. He willed himself to die instead, as we are told many slaves did on the middle passage across the Atlantic. Melville, too, was appalled at human avarice and greed, and he was incapable of writing what his time called a good novel. Everywhere his work breaks out into rashes of insight and bookish lore. Perhaps this comparison does a disservice to Harold Jaffe because to my knowledge he has not yet written a *Moby Dick.* But a "Bartleby," I think so.

The stories of B.H. Friedman's *Coming Close* are described as versions of autobiography, but whether the people we watch there are Friedman or not seems unimportant. What matters is that they are alive on the page and quite believable. In fact, together, these pieces reflect the life, not just of their characters, but of a whole culture as well. Like Evan Connell's stories, they evoke the period of great affluence in American life after the Second World War. This time, however, the perspective is from the largely unquestioning center of that culture, not from its fringes. Like Rock Hudson and Doris Day in the movies of the same period, the people in Friedman's world fall gracefully and energetically into a world of commodities. Their griefs are the griefs of spending and accumulating. They are astonished, even alarmed, that they have accumulated so much, though it is the alarm that ruffles the boyish aplomb of a Carry Grant. "Three cartons of match strikers," the nearly angry protagonist of "Moving in Place" exclaims. "How these small objects sneak into our lives and accumulate." We are meant to smile and sympathize with the problems people have in moving all those *things* into an apartment in Manhattan which has first required the extensive services of a very fashionable designer to make it "livable" to the new occupants. Mercilessly shallow, the story is a perfect match for the mentality it presents.

Fortunately, the book looks into other corners of life. In fact, *Coming Close* is about the growth of the character named B.H. Friedman, from boyhood to the point where—having given up the family business for his writing—he decides to choose a name. We watch how the "small objects sneak" into his life. His father, successful in the shoe business, is a large, gregarious, warm, loyal figure. He is difficult to resist, and after being tempted in college away from business toward writing, Friedman chooses to stay with the family business. It is an emotionally difficult choice, as it is when he leaves it twenty years later.

By that time, his father is dead and he is working for an uncle in a burgeoning real estate empire in Manhattan. He is the heir to the business, and his decision to leave it is complicated by family loyalties. Perhaps the most astonishing thing about the book is this sense of family loyalty and a freedom from rancor, despite his final decision to make another career.

My problem with the book, and here I may be saying the same thing, is that it maintains a moral neutrality in face of the material. That neutrality comes to feel like acceptance of it. This is what makes it often seem like a Hollywood film of the fifties. I looked for irony, hoping it was there, because these people are rendered well and Friedman's writing is crisp and lively, but if it's there, it is total and transparent. *–Roger Mitchell*

TATLIN!, by Guy Davenport. Johns Hopkins. $7.95 (paper)

While *TATLIN!* falls under the category of fiction, Davenport manages to keep a dual commitment to history and invention. He has forged two seemingly conflicting subjects into a book of resonance and depth. Protagonists include Franz Kafka, the Russian artist-architect Tatlin, the ancient Greek philosopher Herakleitos, others. Unifying these six challenging stories is the theme that there is old in the new, that the future stems from the past, that we cannot advance until we have grasped our artistic predecessors. In my favorite selection, "Robot," the discovery of Lascaux is re-created. Robot is a dog with a big tongue, always ready to play, who squeaks when he barks and squats to pee. While chasing a rabbit, he leads local boys to the cave. Later, the Abbé Breuil says:

> "It is not in the prehistoric genius to depict trees. This man Picasso is a painter from the Reindeer Age. The *Guernica* with its wounded horse, its hieratic bull, its placing of images over images, is a prehistoric painting. It honors and grieves and stands in awe. I have copied hundreds and hundreds of these beasts until they file through my dreams. God will take me to them when I die, to the saucy Shetland tarpans whose jet manes run the length of their backs, to the long red ox and wooly rhinoceros. But perhaps the *Guernica* I see is not the one everybody sees. The painting I see is as old as Lascaux."

Davenport writes for the mind, sweeping the reader up in his large spirit and full imagination. This is not a book to be read passively or without some historical sense. Stories continue to arrive in meaning long after they've been absorbed. With enormous verbal resources they carry rich, persuasive associations, Davenport renders remarkable glimpses that add to the stock of available reality. If there were no theme at all, language could serve as theme. In addition to incorporating genuine knowledge, always at Davenport's command, he is devilish, erotic and funny. Because stories don't restrict themselves to facts alone, the reader can delight in contradictions and compelling word-spills. After all, wasn't it Herakleitos who also said, "All things of this world participate in the universal, existing separately."

Guy Davenport is an indispensable writer. Among other books, he gave us *Da Vinci's Bicycle,* that cannot be overpraised. And in *TATLIN!* there is no forgetting the cumulative force of his limber but complex language and brilliant tales.

Fire Drills, by Barbara L. Greenberg. Missouri. $6.95

Lifting the quotidian to documentary heights, Barbara L. Greenberg gives the reader privileged glimpses of an extended family in love and crisis. "In Case of Fire" remembers the death of Martha's mother, through a series of moving recollections, inviting us into a daughter's private state of mind. When Eric comes home from kindergarten, he tells mother and grandmother, "We had a fire grill. We went outside in the rain without our jackets on. I thought it was going to be a cookout." Laughing, Martha thinks her mother is too. But she is weeping instead. "I put my arms around my frail mother and held her and she told me everything. No. I said nothing. I did nothing for her. I took Eric upstairs for a change of clothing, and when I came back to the kitchen my mother was herself again. She was stirring her tea." How often are we a part of the tea-stirring ritual? Greenberg never slides into sentimentality. Instead she allows small things to echo larger things. In "Elephants," Grandma Rosen is dying. Her grandchildren never knew her but fight over who got the longer look into her open coffin. When John and Eric go off for the summer in "What?," Martha tests her maturity by sleeping alone, prompted by Eric's first letter: "When you go to bed at camp, no one says goodnight to you. I guess I'm grown up." In the gently-mocking "Stroke," Nana Blau is ashamed to tell the bridge club her son-in-law is in the liquor business. She says 'pillows' instead. Her daughter brings her a supply to distribute among her friends each time she visits. There is love here! Nana Blau, heaping unsolicited second helpings on her son-in-law's plate, misinterprets the conversation humming around her. "I had a tropical problem once. The doctor gave me a salve for it." And producing the confirming tube it says: *for topical use only.* "Topical, Ma. *Top*ical." "That's what I said," she said. How often have we met the effusive and exasperating Nana Blau in life and fiction? So many times that the 'Jewish mother' has become a part of folklore. Yet they are as nostalgically welcome as old movie classics we watch each time they appear on late night TV.

Very human and hard to forget is the final story, "I, Martha." Though there may be little to praise about a father who used to beat her, Martha knows blood is thicker than water and transforms pain into wisdom. "Now that he is senile and in the custody of strangers, he is surrounded by helping hands but none for holding."

More than nostalgic reflections or cutouts from memory, it is Martha herself who exacts my feeling for the entire collection: "All you need for an angel food cake is eggs, flour, sugar, cream of tartar, and a bit of salt. The whole *is* greater than the sum of its parts."

the transparent eye-ball, by Dallas Wiebe. Burning Deck. $4 (paper)

Magritte is looking over Dallas Wiebe's shoulder in the title story, reinventing worlds where the artist's creation can mean anything the observer thinks. *the transparent eye-ball* introduces Serge de Nimes, who wears a glass eye. In fact, since he's come to collect them, he wears many:

> ". . . the eyes arranged in transparent plastic boxes on the shelves of a glass-doored cupboard which was the cynosure of his living room. There they stared out, arranged according to their chronological uses. The glass eye for New Year's Day had a stuffed olive in it instead of an iris and a lens. The eye for Valentine's Day had a red heart in it. Good Friday, a black cross. Easter, a lily. May 1, a daffodil. Fourth of July, an American flag. Halloween, a pumpkin. Christmas, a bright and shining star. After those for special days came those for general occasions; one with the Lord's Prayer printed in it for Sundays and one with a peace symbol for demonstrations against the war in Viet Nam. All arranged eight across in eight rows one above the other except for the bottom row that still had space eight for one more. Serge expected someday to lay on that space the glass eye for his funeral."

When his son dies "18 months, 3 days, 6 hours, 26 minutes and 10 seconds" after he is born, Serge wears a crystal eye to his funeral so everyone can look straight into his emptiness. In between this optical framework, Serge begs forgiveness for everyone from Slippery Dick to Robert Bly; people and events cover two pages, giving social and political current to this surreal landscape, confirming my belief that a good way to arrive at the *real* thing is to start with fantasy.

The other three stories collected in this book are rooted in reality. "Billy Jack" is a large ram who shoos flies while Dresden burns. In "Obituary," the time is World War II. And Kansas farmers use three kinds of silos for their ensilage. Grassgreen, who we first meet in "Billy Jack," is dead and the story recalls her life and unfulfilled aspirations—one lover who fell from a tractor, was killed, and sent *Good Housekeeping* posthumously. Another was a dapper dresser who took her to the first drive-in movie in Wichita and afterwards mysteriously disappeared. "His clothes appeared now and then on Salvation Army indigents." "Obituary" is a stirring, well-wrought piece of writing whose elliptical and ironic tone is almost an elegy.

"Cucumber Sandwich" revolves around Herb Root, a macho minor league ball player who doesn't mind the low pay because he can always slip a gushing female fan his room number. When Herb suddenly loses his libido, Harry, the old veteran, comes up with a climactic remedy:

> "Look honey," Harry reassured him, "I've been on this stand a long time. I'm a vet and I know what's what." Herb shivered in the cold as Harry rolled him over on his back. In the darkness, he felt the hands on his thighs, the gentle touch, like mother-warm bread, around him. Light flickered through the curtains. Herb could hear the traffic, the horns honking and newsboys shouting. He heard music pulsing up from the bar below. When Herb stopped shivering in the neck, he thought, "Jesus, if Harry's getting this cucumber sandwich together, I can at least add a little mayonnaise." And he did.

For all their eccentric energy, these stories have a light touch. There is much to admire in Mr. Wiebe's confident style. Fashioning strange circumstances, tales gain momentum and dramatic immediacy along the way, never engineering false moves.

The New Orleans of Possibilities, by David Madden. Louisiana State. $7.95 (paper)

David Madden's stories aren't all about New Orleans, nor do I come away with the spirit of the city. Each story promises more than it delivers, I'm sad to say. A coach blackmails a young basketball player in "A Part In Pirandello," forcing him to dress up as a woman in a school play. There are heavy homosexual overtones but little candor here; a background hum mutes erotic clarity and the theme of awakening sexuality is never really plumbed. In the title story, "The New Orleans of Possibilities," while the situation is provocative, the tone and texture seem one-celled. Kenneth Howard is walking through a flea market in the French Quarter when he discovers a young girl selling a box of old photographs. Walking past, he is drawn back. Browsing through the pile, he startles at one picture that mirrors his face. A lumbering list of descriptions chronicle each photograph, making me feel like somebody's grandmother is sinking into her paper-past, wearing me out with a litany of lost love and ancient history. The story ends weakly when Kenneth returns next day and buys the whole lot for twenty bucks. A black boy says, "Man, that trash belong to *you*." Idea exceeds execution here, making me wish this archetypal situation animated more powerful reverberations.

"Looking at the Dead" describes a house where every one is dead and contains a four-page telegram of one-sentence details. The last of them reads:

> Roaches do not stop gnawing on the teeth-scraped artichoke leaves.
> Vomit on the living room rug is cooling.
> The telephone rings for the first time since the burglar left the house.
> The living are captive now in the house.

This seems a meaningless shift in narrative tone. Heavy-handed, this overdose of repetition provokes only casual interest.

I wanted to like "In the Bag" so much, I read it three times. The concept is wonderful; a nameless man is carted off in a large bag and released into an eerie setting with decor of an earlier century. But nothing happens. The man is thrown back into the bag. Extended metaphor? Symbol of humanity struggling for survival? The slackening off in intensity makes me not care, craving wider prospects. These stories leave me frustrated enough to succumb to a 'tell-you-what-I'm gonna do' barker, who while he can't shed light, radiates heat. Heat is what this collection needs. Mr. Madden's writing is earnest enough and I sense a private vision, but this book just never hits the vein.

The End of the World is Los Angeles, by Francois Camoin, Missouri. $6.95

Southern California is the backdrop for this collection of stories whose characters manifest lives lived not out of banality and loneliness, but in spite of it. Eminently entertaining and easily read, these observant cameos are zany portrayals of Californian transplants who came west to make it.

"Leiberman's Father" is a woman. In this first story, Camoin renders a perfect balance of pathos and irony when Leiberman is approached by a woman who tells him about himself while he is having lunch. Leiberman seems to be having a 'Butley' kind of life; his son-in-law is a cold fish, his daughter is seeing a married man and wants to come home, his real father doesn't want to hear his problems, his beloved pine is dying and, when he cuts it down, the force of the falling tree smashes into the side of the house while his neighbor, Eisenberg, the psychiatrist, laughs. So why not be comforted by his new 'father' who seems a perfectly decent and understanding woman? Why not, at story's close, practice her name "Daddy" under his breath?

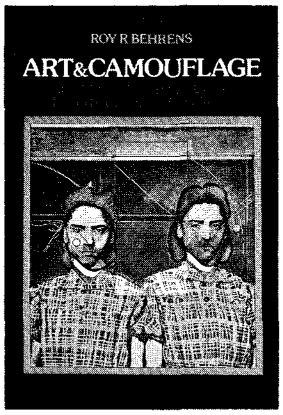
"Teller, the Bear & the Yellow Thunderbird" is a different story entirely. This playful title camouflages the hostility pent up in 40-year-old Teller, who lives happily with a bear in Laguana Beach. The only interruption of bliss is his mother who lives a short 10 miles away. Not your usual milky mom, she is willful and tough; a member of the Auxiliary Police and shoots like an expert. Setting herself up as a sniper, she's had enough of Teller wrestling on the lawn with his Bear. And she shoots her son's 450 pound darling. And his cat God. "Now you'll have to love somebody human, Teller. Love something human, why can't you?" Camoin's conscious design shows us why Teller can't.

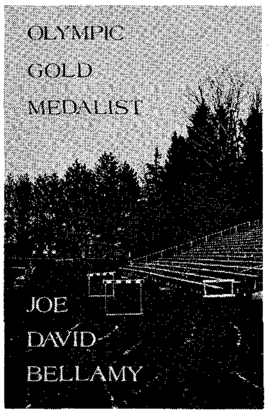
In "The Vanishing," Cahn's wife lets him shoot a tumbler off her head to rekindle her husband's love. We meet Eisenberg, the psychiatrist again, in "Now She Sleeps," married to a pretty young wife who comes and goes as she pleases. Dressing in her clothes, he follows her to a lesbian bar. Discovered, he's beaten to the floor and all he can do is laugh like a duck: "Quack, quack, quack."

So much for love! This is an energetic and energizing collection of stories, often grotesque and eerily foreseeing. *—Roberta Metz Swann*

Roger Mitchell teaches at Indiana University, Roberta Metz Swann at New York's Cooper Union.

BOOKS FROM THE NAR


ROY R BEHRENS
ART&CAMOUFLAGE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THE HEART
NEVER FITS
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stories by
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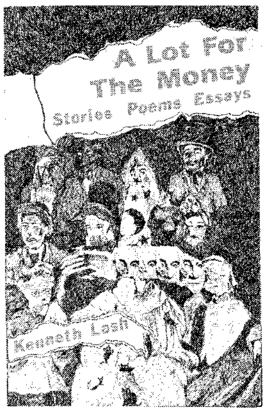
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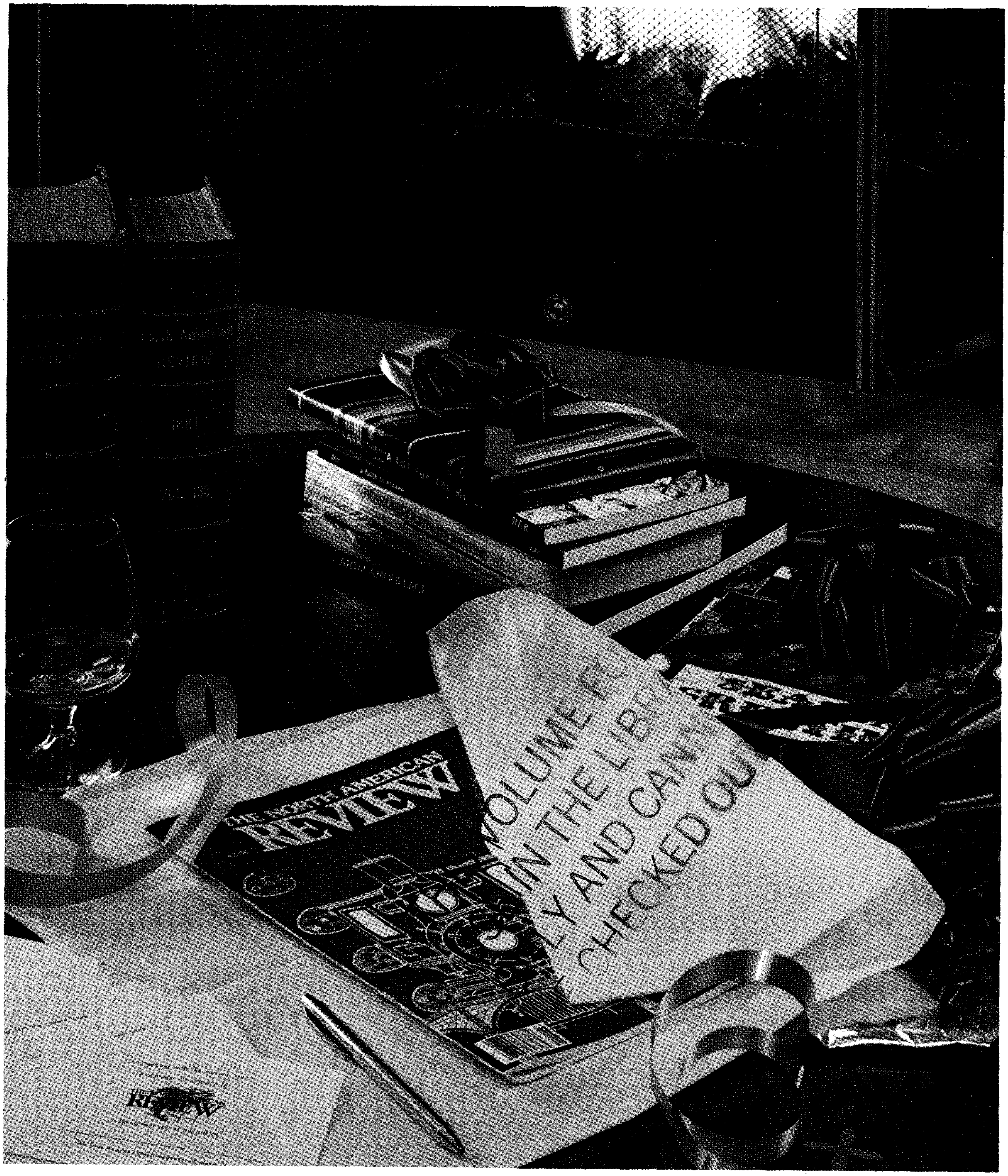
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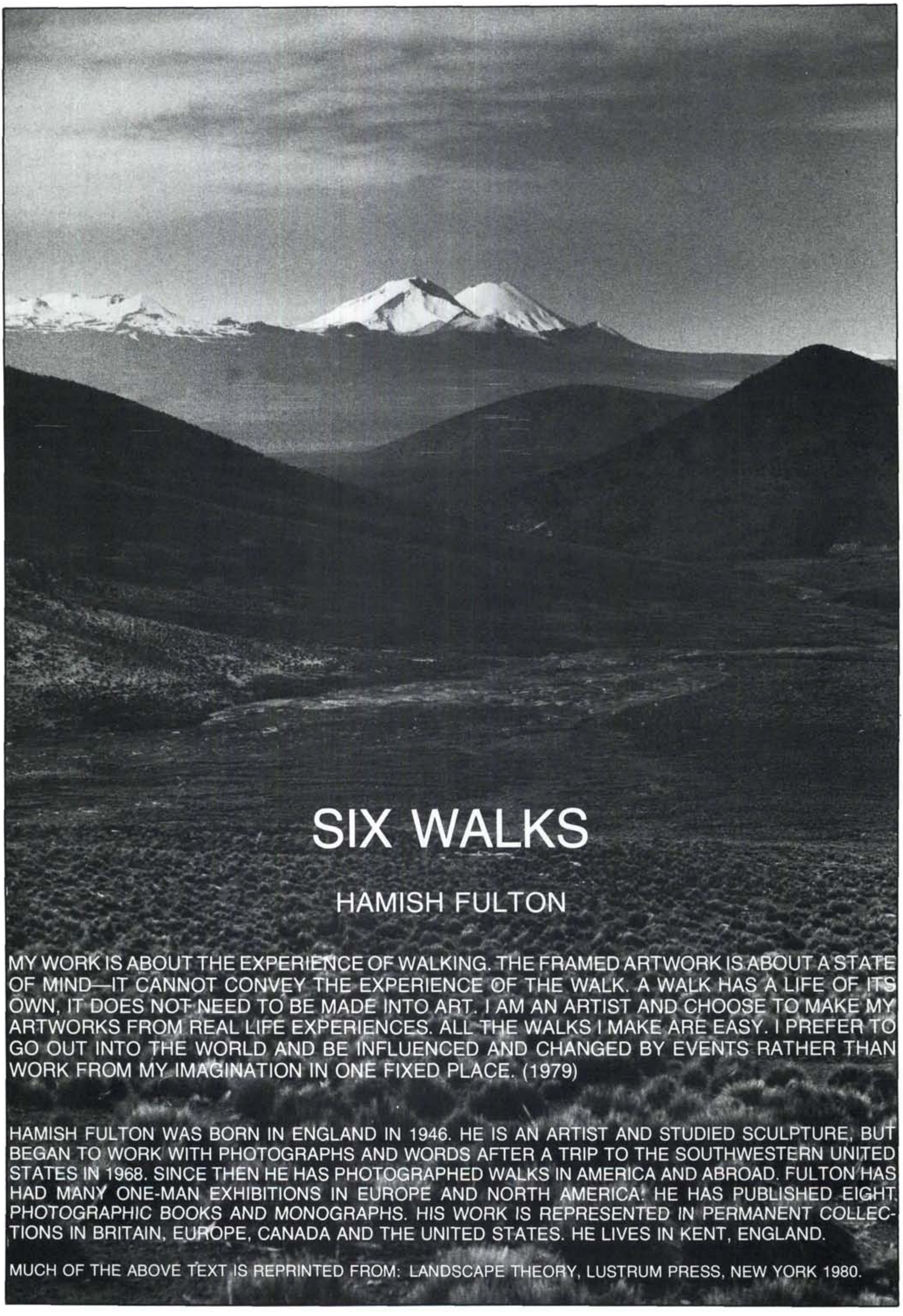


SIX WALKS

HAMISH FULTON

MY WORK IS ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF WALKING. THE FRAMED ARTWORK IS ABOUT A STATE OF MIND—IT CANNOT CONVEY THE EXPERIENCE OF THE WALK. A WALK HAS A LIFE OF ITS OWN, IT DOES NOT NEED TO BE MADE INTO ART. I AM AN ARTIST AND CHOOSE TO MAKE MY ARTWORKS FROM REAL LIFE EXPERIENCES. ALL THE WALKS I MAKE ARE EASY. I PREFER TO GO OUT INTO THE WORLD AND BE INFLUENCED AND CHANGED BY EVENTS RATHER THAN WORK FROM MY IMAGINATION IN ONE FIXED PLACE. (1979)

HAMISH FULTON WAS BORN IN ENGLAND IN 1946. HE IS AN ARTIST AND STUDIED SCULPTURE, BUT BEGAN TO WORK WITH PHOTOGRAPHS AND WORDS AFTER A TRIP TO THE SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES IN 1968. SINCE THEN HE HAS PHOTOGRAPHED WALKS IN AMERICA AND ABROAD. FULTON HAS HAD MANY ONE-MAN EXHIBITIONS IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA. HE HAS PUBLISHED EIGHT PHOTOGRAPHIC BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS. HIS WORK IS REPRESENTED IN PERMANENT COLLECTIONS IN BRITAIN, EUROPE, CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES. HE LIVES IN KENT, ENGLAND.

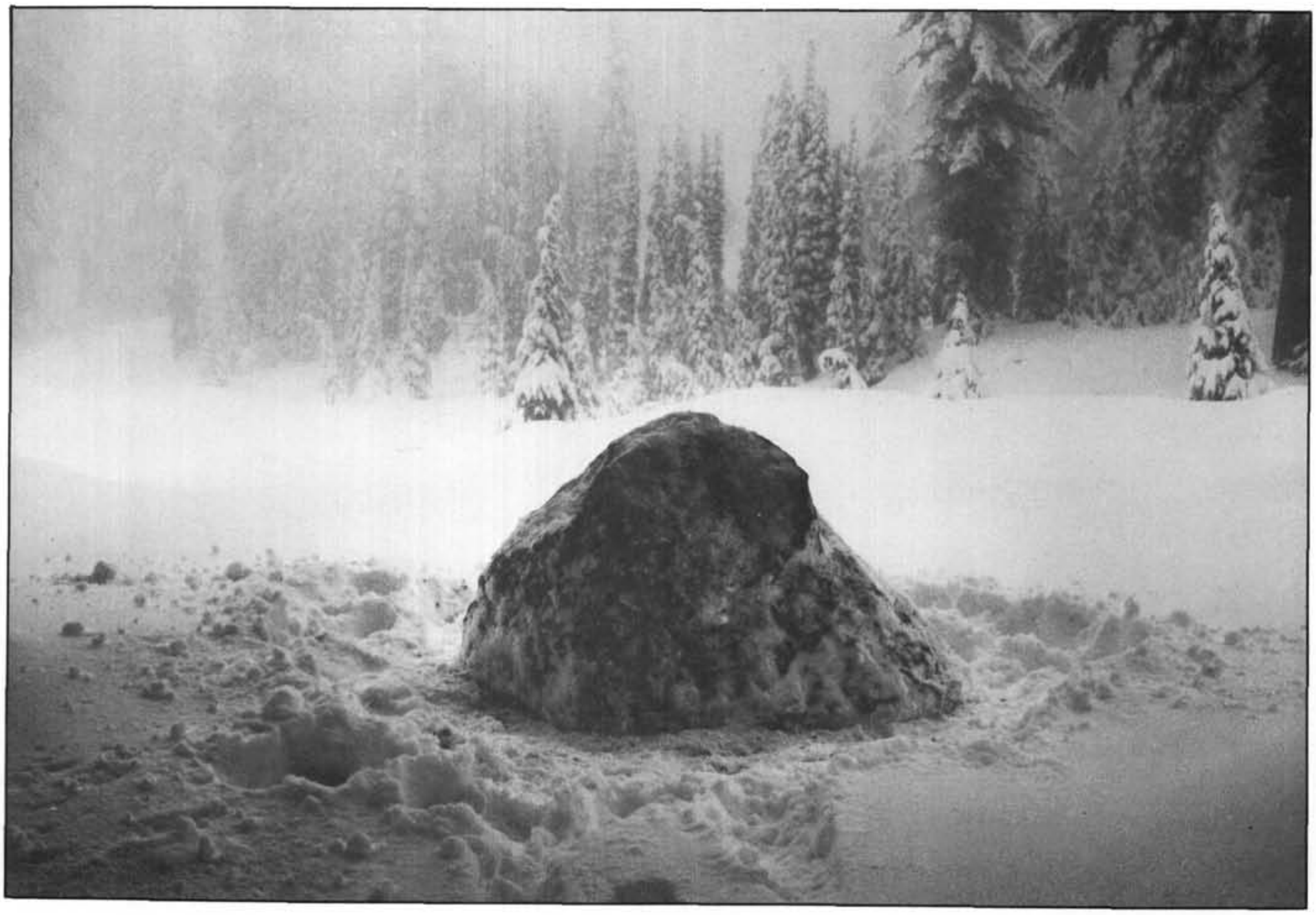
MUCH OF THE ABOVE TEXT IS REPRINTED FROM: LANDSCAPE THEORY, LUSTRUM PRESS, NEW YORK 1980.

THE CLOUDS AT DUSK A ONE NIGHT BIVOUAC ON THE SUMMIT OF PICO DE ORIZABA MEXICO 1979

AYMARA

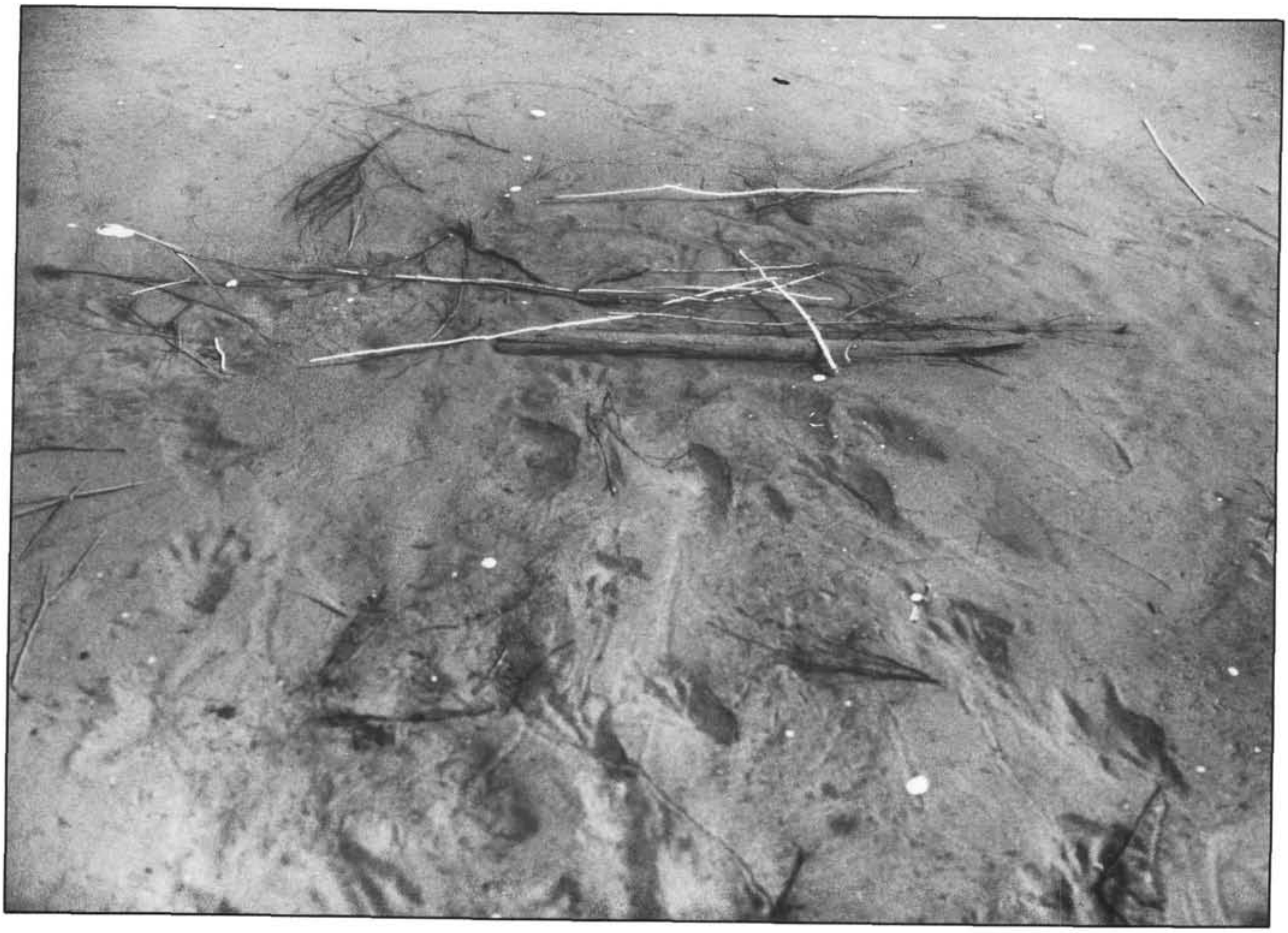
AN ELEVEN DAY WANDERING WALK FROM THE RIO MAURI TO THE RIO ACHUTA AND BACK TO THE RIO MAURI

WESTERN BOLIVIA EARLY 1981



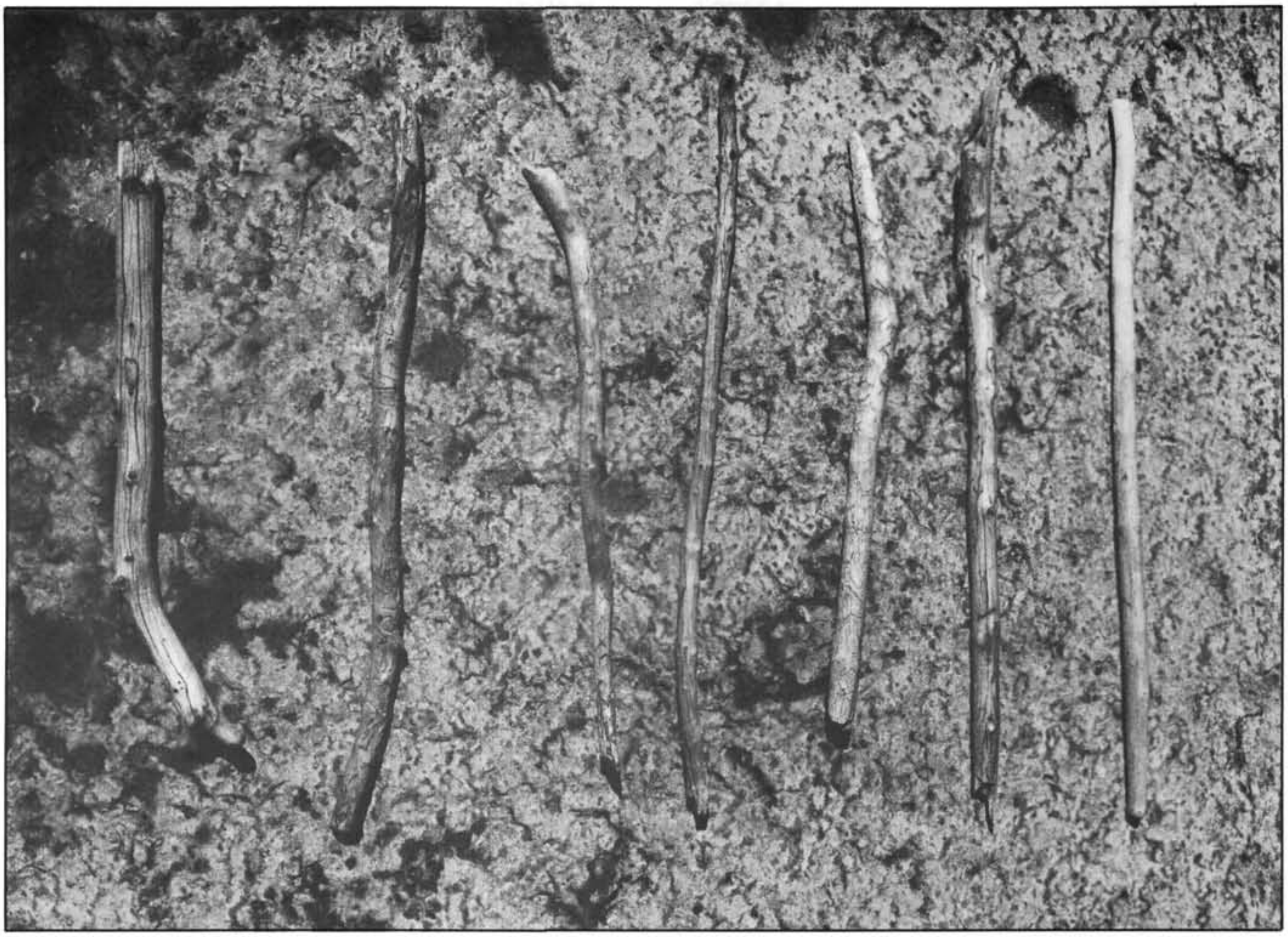
STANDING COYOTE

A SEVEN DAY WALK IN NORTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA
ENDING ON THE NIGHT OF THE OCTOBER FULL MOON 1981



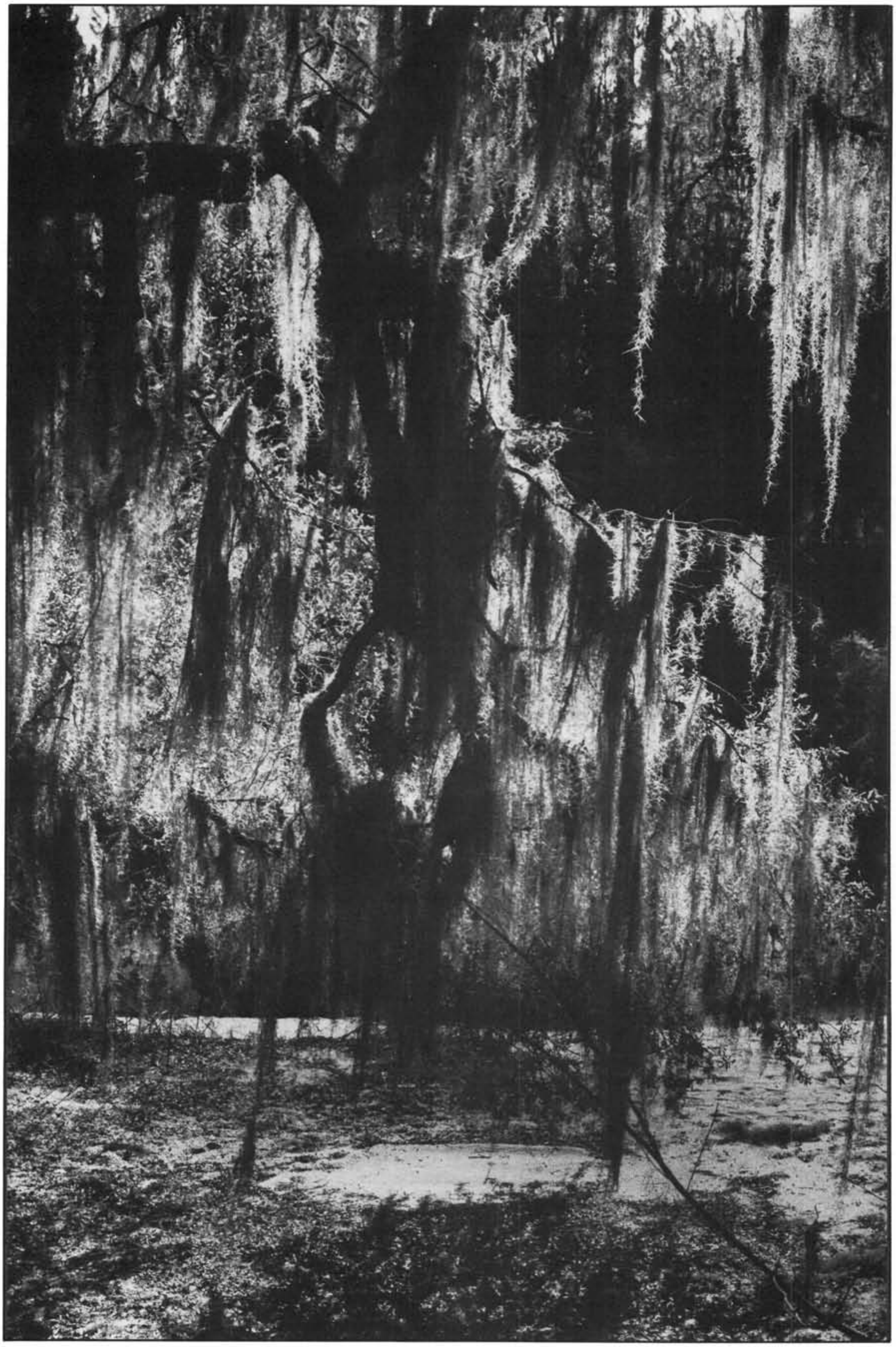
BEAVER STICKS

FOUR DAYS WALKING BY A RIVER FOUR NIGHTS CAMPING BESIDE THE WATER ALBERTA SPRING 1980



SEVEN DAYS

WHISTLING ELK　A SEVEN DAY WALK IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS OF ALBERTA
AUTUMN 1978



MOSS SWEPT CIRCLE

A SEVEN DAY WALK BY THE SUWANNEE RIVER
FLORIDA EARLY 1982